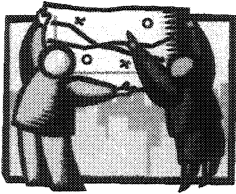


## Chapter 6: School Meals

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This chapter provides suggestions and examples for planning actions involving the school meal program.

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*Creating awareness of the role and value of the school meal program*

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*Using the community review to identify school meal opportunities for healthy eating and physical activity choices*

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*A key to initiating and sustaining changes*

## Chapter 6 *School Meals*

### Module 1: Creating School Meal Awareness

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#### Step Up and Step Out to create awareness

Children who eat breakfast at school have increased standardized achievement test scores, improved attendance and reduced tardiness. (1) Students who eat breakfast have improved academic, behavioral, and emotional functioning. (2)

Students who eat lunch that meets National School Lunch Program (NSLP) requirements eat more vegetables, drink more milk and fewer sweetened beverages, eat more grain mixtures, and fewer cookies, cakes and salty snacks than students who make other lunchtime choices. (3)

#### **The reality**

Fewer than 60% of students choose the NSLP lunch. (3) Food options beyond the school lunch and breakfast are available to students in many schools. Foods sold a la carte, in school stores, in snack bars or in vending machines do not currently have to meet any standards for nutritional quality. (4)

The Centers for Disease Control and Prevention 1994 School Health Policies and Programs Study showed (5)

- ♥ 77.7% of all middle/junior and senior high schools have vending machines that students can use
- ♥ Foods sold as school fund raisers compete with school meals in 25.3% of all middle/junior high schools, and 41.6% of all senior high schools
- ♥ More than one-third of all middle/junior high and senior high schools approached or were approached by a fast food restaurant wanting to offer foods for school meals.

USDA's 1998 School Food Purchase Study presented data that indicated (5)

- ♥ There was a sharp decline in volume of fluid milk (-29%), and strong growth in fruit juices (+31%), fruit drinks (+181%), carbonated beverages (+1,103%) in purchases from School Year 1984/1985 to School Year 1997/1998.

- ♥ A la carte foods at lunch are offered in less than half of all public elementary schools but in three of every four public middle/secondary schools. Milk, fruit drinks, ice cream, and cookies are most frequently cited as leading a la carte sellers in elementary schools. In middle/secondary schools, fruit drinks, pizza, snack chips, ice cream, cookies, and french fries are top a la carte sales items.

## Reversing the trend

How can the trend be reversed?

1. It begins with creating an awareness of the issues. What are the factors that create unhealthy choices? What are the issues creating unhealthy choices?

They may look different in each community, but the National Food Service Management Institute (1998) examined factors associated with student participation in the National School Lunch Program in 12 high schools, and found: (5)

- ♥ The students perceived the lunches lines to be too long, the dining room to be crowded, and the time available to eat, once seated, to be inadequate
- ♥ Students with low participation ate off-campus much more frequently than student with high-student participation schools

Step Up and Step Out helps you to look at issues specific to your community.

2. It continues with an awareness of solutions...solutions suggested in this manual and in other resources, including *The Prescription for Change: Ten Keys to Promote Healthy Eating in Schools* (5) identified by five leading medical associations and the United States Department of Agriculture have been developed to assist each school community in writing its own prescription for change.
3. It reverses when solutions are initiated.

## Exploring the issues



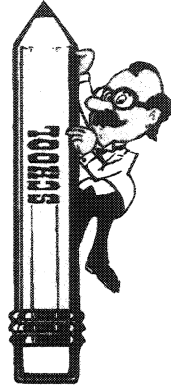
The school cafeteria is a wonderful learning laboratory for healthy eating choices! It is *very* much worth the effort to optimize opportunities for learning and practicing skills by planning school meal actions that make a difference!

## Take a look at perceptions

In an interview survey conducted at one school, students, faculty, and administrators were asked the question, "When I say, 'school lunch', what comes to mind?"

Here are a few of the answers given:

- ♥ "Homemade bread"
- ♥ "Not enough to eat"
- ♥ "Too much starch"
- ♥ "Yucky!"
- ♥ "Yummy!"
- ♥ "Hurry and eat"
- ♥ "Chili and cinnamon rolls"
- ♥ "Where are the butter pats?"
- ♥ "Convenience, prepared foods"
- ♥ "Need to make budget cuts, save some money"



With the wide variety of responses, the food service director was left wondering where to go next!

The survey demonstrates the need for better teamwork with students, parents, faculty, administration, and community to identify school meal issues and build support.

## When it comes to food, who's right?

Ask a group of people their definition of "good food", what they like to eat, or the best way to prepare a food item, and you will get wide and varied answers. As the above mentioned survey indicates, there are also variable ideas about what school food service is...does...and should be...from those the program serves.

What can the coalition do to address concerns surrounding school meals, and create an awareness of the vital role this program plays in the overall goal of increasing opportunities for healthy eating choices and physical activity?



## Address "Food for Thought" concerns



**Food for Thought:** The potential for increasing revenue, not nutrition, sometimes determines decisions made regarding school meal practices, such as whether or not a la carte items are offered, and how or when vending machines are used.

**Coalition Action:** The coalition can work with administrators and school food service staff to develop options that create a balance between revenue generating factors and healthy eating choices.



**Food for Thought:** School meal programs, in general, seem to receive much criticism and complaints from students, parents, teachers, and the community at large.

**Coalition Action:** The coalition can develop a communication system whereby concerns can be discussed, and actions taken to address the issues. Actions may include, but are not limited to, listening sessions, student youth advisory groups, liaisons with faculty committees, parent/teacher groups, surveys, and cafeteria observation.



**Food for Thought:** To some degree, we all purchase, cook, and eat foods. Therefore, in a very general term, we all are "food experts." As a result, ideas surrounding food can become very emotional and personal because they are a matter of individual choice.

**Coalition Action:** Take the emotion out of the discussion by reminding everyone of personal differences and to apply the things that work for them. The coalition can keep programs, presentations, and efforts based on fact, education, and how to increase healthy eating choices.



**Food for Thought:** There is a misconception that as you improve the nutritional value of the school meal, the cost will increase.

**Coalition Action:** The coalition can help promote healthy changes, and market the benefits of offering healthy school meals. This allows the food service director time to implement sound budgeting and food service management practices.



**Food for Thought:** Decision-makers, such as administrators and school board members, as well as teachers, and parents, often have little or no school food service background. Therefore they are limited in their understanding of the functioning of this vital initiative component. (6)



**Coalition Action:** Quantity food service requires a completely different set of skills than cooking for a family. Your coalition can showcase the skills (menu planning, purchasing, preparation, equipment usage/maintenance, and time management) the school food service staff demonstrates daily through a variety of promotional activities. Educating others about the expertise and skills involved in school meals can go a long way in developing support. Try a “Walk Through the Food Service” activity. See Module 4: School Food Service Links for a description of this activity.



**Food for Thought:** At times it seems food vendors do not have many healthy food choices to offer, and that there is more interest in selling high-profit items to schools.

**Coalition Action:** School food service staff and coalition members can work with vendors to educate them regarding the mission and goals of the initiative and develop a win-win partnership. Vendors want the business and can become important and recognized partners in creating outstanding school food service operations.



**Food for Thought:** People sometimes have concerns, or develop stereotypes or bias, when there is talk of healthy change. Some food industry associations might become unnecessarily concerned that some products will be limited or excluded from the school menu.

**Coalition Action:** First, remember all foods can fit in a healthy diet so it isn't necessary to exclude certain types of foods. Changes may still need to be made and acceptance of change can occur slowly. Take small steps with small changes in a school menu and market the results...good taste, healthy choice, and enjoyment of eating! Develop partnerships with food producers and obtain input about how to best incorporate products as healthy eating choices in school meal plans.



**Food for Thought:** Teachers have tremendous influence on students' perception and participation in school meal programs. They can be powerful advocates or opponents.

**Coalition Action:** The coalition can support the link between the school meal program and classroom messages of healthy eating.



**Food for Thought:** There is a public perception that healthy eating habits are an “all or nothing” proposition. Some people may not understand the concepts of moderation, variety, proportion, and balance.

**Coalition Action:** The coalition can work to support the concept of “all foods can fit”, and recognize the key is to create increased opportunities for healthy eating choices.



**Food for Thought:** There is an age-old belief that as food gets healthier, it doesn't have as much taste appeal; and that everything that tastes good must be bad for you!

**Coalition Action:** Changes implemented in school menus will demonstrate to students, parents and the community that healthy food tastes great!



**Food for Thought:** At some schools, there is a concern that school food service staff are not adequately skilled and trained to meet the needs of the job tasks.

**Coalition Action:** In some instances, this is correct. It is important for the coalition to collaborate with administration to show support for education and training of food service staff, and for staff to be recognized for their initiative and achievement after receiving training.

## Building the team concept

Here are some things for the coalition to remember when working with various partners to create awareness of school meals and build the team concept.



**Working with  
administration  
and school board**

### ***Remember:***

- ♥ This group may not recognize that healthy changes in the school meal program does not necessarily mean more money and staff are needed.
- ♥ Complaints are often offered without all the facts and accurate information. Offer the “rest of the story”.
- ♥ Food service staff need recognition and support for their efforts.
- ♥ School meals play an important role in the overall image of the school itself.
- ♥ School meals can be a powerful marketing tool for the school.



**Working with  
school food service  
staff**

***Remember:***

- ♥ The food service staff want the students to like the food.
- ♥ Food service staff may fear students won't like foods if the recipes are altered to make them healthier.
- ♥ Staff members take pride in their work.
- ♥ Staff may fear changes will create more work without more time.
- ♥ There is a close relationship between understanding and personally identifying with the healthy lifestyle goals and objectives of the initiative and supporting the initiative for the community.

***Remember:***

- ♥ Students may be skeptical that foods offered in school meals can taste good *and* be nutritious.
- ♥ The idea that all foods can fit in a balanced eating pattern may also be new to students.
- ♥ Students feel valued and a sense of ownership when their opinions and ideas are sought and used.
- ♥ Students can be involved in the development of partnerships between the classroom, athletic programs, and school meals.



**Working with  
Students**



**Working  
with  
Parents**

***Remember:***

- ♥ School meals are opportunities for students to receive a quality meal of economic and nutritional value. Market this to parents!
- ♥ School lunch is intended to supply 1/3<sup>rd</sup> of the student's daily caloric and nutritional needs, but parents often don't understand this factor.
- ♥ School meal participation offers an opportunity to encourage family discussion about nutrition and healthy choice issues.
- ♥ The school meal participation offers an opportunity to encourage family discussion about nutrition and healthy choice issues.
- ♥ The school meal program models healthy food choices that can be repeated in the home.



**Working with  
the community  
at large**

**Remember:**

- ♥ The community-at-large offers great opportunities for partnering with school meals, but they often go unrecognized. Take steps to recognize community members.
- ♥ People outside the school often do not know how school meals function, and their only information is what they “hear” downtown.
- ♥ Most community partners have ties to the school. Look for ways that these links can be used to create a connection with school meals.

**Step Up and Step Out By using Dietary Guidelines  
for Americans to create awareness of healthy eating**

Dietary Guidelines offer simple advice for healthy eating and physical activity.

**Dietary Guidelines for Americans 2000, 5<sup>th</sup> Edition (7)**

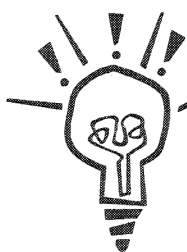
- ♥ Aim for a healthy weight
- ♥ Be physically active each day
- ♥ Let the Pyramid guide your food choices
- ♥ Choose a variety of grains daily, especially whole grains
- ♥ Choose a variety of fruits and vegetables daily
- ♥ Keep food safe to eat
- ♥ Choose a diet that is low in saturated fat and cholesterol and moderate in total fat
- ♥ Choose beverages and foods to moderate your intake of sugars
- ♥ Choose and prepare foods with less salt
- ♥ If you drink alcoholic beverages, do so in moderation



**References and Resources**

- (1) Meyers AF, Sampson AE, Weitzman M, Rogers BL, Kayne H. “School Breakfast Program and School Performance,” *Am J Dis Child*. 1989; 143: 1234-1239 as cited in *Healthy School Nutrition Environments: Promoting Healthy Eating Behaviors*, 2000

- (2) Murphy JM, Pagano ME, Nachmani J, Sperling P, Kane S, Kleinman RE. "The Relationship of School Breakfast to Psychosocial and Academic Functioning," *Arch of Pediatr and Adoles Med.* 1998; 152: 899-906. as cited in *Healthy School Nutrition Environments: Promoting Healthy Eating Behaviors*, 2000
- (3) Burghardt J, Devaney B. eds. "The School Nutrition Dietary Assessment Study," *Am J Clin Nut.* 1995; 61 (suppl): 213S-220S, 232S-240S. as cited in *Healthy School Nutrition Environments: Promoting Healthy Eating Behaviors*, 2000
- (4) United States Department of Agriculture. *Healthy School Nutrition Environments: Promoting Healthy Eating Behaviors*, 2000. Online at [www.fns.usda.gov/cnd/HealthyEating/HealthyEatingBehavior/healthy\\_eatingchallenge.htm](http://www.fns.usda.gov/cnd/HealthyEating/HealthyEatingBehavior/healthy_eatingchallenge.htm). Accessed June 20, 2000.
- (5) United States Department of Agriculture. *Healthy Eating Environments*, 2000. Online at [www.fns.usda.gov/cnd/HealthyEating/school\\_environment.htm](http://www.fns.usda.gov/cnd/HealthyEating/school_environment.htm). Accessed June 20, 2000.
- (7) Information for persons working with U.S.D.A.'s child nutrition programs is available through U.S.D.A.'s Healthy School Meals Resource System (HSMRS Database). <http://schoolmeals.nal.usda:8001/database/index.html>
- (6) The Dietary Guidelines for Americans 2000, 5<sup>th</sup> Edition, U.S. Department of Agriculture Center for Nutrition Policy and Promotion, [www.usda.gov/cnpp](http://www.usda.gov/cnpp). To purchase a single or bulk copies of the 5<sup>th</sup> edition, contact the Government Printing Office 202-512-1800.



**Module Tip:**

School meals is often the "unknown" partner in developing a quality school health initiative. Creating an awareness of the vital role of the school meal program and expertise of the school food service staff is key to ensuring a successful, sustained effort by the coalition.

**FAQs:**

- ❑ **Question:** Won't the price of a school lunch have to be increased with these new healthy changes being added in the menu?
- ❑ **Answer:** Balancing the budget with menu planning can be a challenge, but one that can be accomplished with a collaborative effort from administration, food vendors, and food service staff.
- ❑ **Question:** Won't the kid's favorite foods have to be eliminated from the menu to meet the guidelines of the initiative?  
**Answer:** With skilled menu planning, and the use of a variety of foods in the meal plan, even high fat favorites can still find their place on the menu. Remember, all foods can fit!!

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**Module Glossary:**

***A la Carte:*** School meal choices that are not a part of a USDA reimbursable meal plan.



## Brainstorming School Meal Awareness

1. List awareness creating activities your community can use for school meals. Remember to plan something for each community group (children, teens, parents, senior citizens, business, etc.).
2. Include these activities in an action plan.

**Children:** *Example: Food Pyramid posters in classrooms with “impromptu” discussions of how that day’s school meal “fits.”*

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**Teens:** *Example: Healthy eating bulletin board and nutrient analysis of menu items in cafeteria.*

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**Parents:** *Example: A school meal “happenings” column in the school’s parent newsletter.*

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**Senior Citizens:** *Example: “Lunch and Learn” programs at the Senior Service’s Center.*

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Example



## Environmental Change Plan

Objective: By 2005, there will be at least 4 actions that promote school meals.

Environmental change methods planned. Check all that apply.	Actions and resources needed to implement the plan	Problems to resolve	Who takes action, and by what date?	Review— results of actions Check all that apply.
<input type="checkbox"/> Policy <input checked="" type="checkbox"/> Collaboration <input checked="" type="checkbox"/> Repetition <input checked="" type="checkbox"/> Education <input checked="" type="checkbox"/> Support <input checked="" type="checkbox"/> Reward	<p><b>Action:</b> <i>Plan "Cat in the Hat Day" cafeteria event</i></p> <p><b>Marketing Plan:</b> <i>Have students plan and implement a marketing campaign</i></p> <p><b>Resources:</b> <i>Menu, classroom to materials for cafeteria event</i></p>		<p><i>Food service director heads committee to initiate plans by 1/6/05</i></p>	<p><b>Communication:</b></p> <input type="checkbox"/> Great marketing <input type="checkbox"/> Need M-and-M's <p><b>Time:</b></p> <input type="checkbox"/> Good timing <input type="checkbox"/> Needs work <p><b>Location:</b></p> <input type="checkbox"/> Good <input type="checkbox"/> Needs work <p><b>Resources:</b></p> <input type="checkbox"/> Feasible cost <input type="checkbox"/> Good <input type="checkbox"/> Needs work <p><b>Participation:</b></p> <input type="checkbox"/> Good <input type="checkbox"/> Needs work <p><b>Overall:</b></p> <input type="checkbox"/> Great-continue <input type="checkbox"/> Good-revise <input type="checkbox"/> Fair-revise
-OT-  <b>Problems resolved:</b> <input type="checkbox"/> Communication <input type="checkbox"/> Time <input type="checkbox"/> Location <input type="checkbox"/> Lack of equipment <input type="checkbox"/> Other	<p><b>Action:</b> <i>Plan student designed marketing campaign</i></p> <p><b>Marketing Plan:</b> <i>To be determined by students</i></p> <p><b>Resources:</b> <i>Determined by events planned</i></p> <p><b>Action:</b> <i>Art classes to design decorations for event</i></p> <p><b>Marketing Plan:</b> <i>To be determined by students</i></p> <p><b>Resources:</b> <i>Paper and other art supplies</i></p>		<p><i>4<sup>th</sup> grade art teachers coordinate art design by 1/15/05</i></p>	

Comments: An example of one of the planned cafeteria events, "Cat in the Hat Day," follows.

**Example**



**Action!**

**Event Planning Tool**

**Title Of Program/Project/Event:** “Cat in the Hat Day”...What’s in a Food’s Color?

☐ Media ☒ School ☐ Business ☐ Community

**Target Audience:** (check all planned for your activity)

☒ Students 580 ☐ Parents 55 ☒ Teachers 30 ☐ School meal director and staff \_\_\_\_\_

☒ School administrators \_\_\_\_\_ ☐ Business/community leaders/community-at-large \_\_\_\_\_

**Outline/Description/Objectives/Ideas:**

1. Read “Cat in the Hat” in the classroom. Discuss the color of foods and how it affects our food choices. Discuss unusual food colors as well as lack of color in meals. Compare all white meals like pears, mashed potatoes, turkey, and white milk to a meal with contrasting colors. Create menus from food models or magazine pictures, trying different color combinations.
2. Taste foods in the classroom that come in “white” and another color, i.e., white vs. sweet potato, white vs. purple grape juice, white vs. pink grapefruit. Compare their nutrients.
3. Have someone dress up as the “Cat in the Hat” for a cafeteria appearance.
4. Food service serves white and sweet potatoes (or a choice of purple or white grape juice).
5. Play “hot potato” in physical education class.

**Marketing Plan:** Posters advertising the event. Announcement on monthly menu.

**Resource Materials/Supplies/Food/Handouts:**

Recipes/menu

Foods to taste

Food models or magazine pictures

Beanbags or similar equipment for “hot potato”

Instructions for classroom and physical education activities

**Costs/Funding Source:**

Minimal depending on activities selected

**Manpower Needed:**

School food service staff for lunch

Classroom/PE teachers

**Space/Time/Date Requirements:**

Cafeteria/classroom space

**Prep Time:**

1-2 hours

**Alternate Plan:**

Have a picture of “Cat in the Hat” in the cafeteria instead of having someone dress up. Use the idea in conjunction with promoting reading.

**Comments:**

Menu – “Cat in the Hat” Specials: Green Eggs (spinach) and Ham, Red/White Striped Hats, Cat’s Rhyming Fruits, Rainy Day Biscuits, Hat’s Off to You, Cat’s Drink.

## Chapter 6 *School Meals*

### Module 2: Environmental Changes with School Meals

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#### Step Up and Step Out to develop school meals as a key component

Now is the time to create actions that increase healthy eating choices, and link food service to the other components.



#### Where to start?

**1. Involve key players**

The school food service director plays a vital role in the actions planned and needs to be a part of planning from the very beginning.



**2. Use information from the community review, listening sessions and VMSEA planning**  
Planning is now directed towards specific actions to meet the objectives set for school meals.

**3. Build on what exists**

Begin with easy to implement and low cost actions. Be flexible.

**4. Plan actions using the environmental change methods**

The methods are discussed in Chapter 2 *Action Planning* Module 5: Action Planning Tools to create plans for change:

- |                 |              |           |
|-----------------|--------------|-----------|
| ♥ Policy        | ♥ Repetition | ♥ Support |
| ♥ Collaboration | ♥ Education  | ♥ Reward  |

**5. Plan for ways to measure success**

Tips for measuring success are given in Module 5 of this Chapter.

**Planning for Environmental Changes:**

1. Involve key players
2. Use information from the community review, listening sessions and VMSEA planning.
3. Build on what exists.
4. Plan actions using environmental change methods
5. Plan ways to measure success
6. Take actions
7. Review results

## 6. Take actions

Planning is very important, but groups can get bogged down and people lose interest if actions are not taken early. The only way to be sure something will work is to try it!

## 7. Review results

The **Environmental Change Plan** is very helpful. The planning steps can be reviewed and comments for revision noted. It provides an excellent communication tool.

## Action planning for environmental change



All six environmental change methods suggested in **Step Up and Step Out** can be applied to School Meals. Keep in mind that the methods can be used alone or in combination but form a strong circle of change when all six are combined.

## “Policy” as a method for environmental change



Policies create a required environmental change and are very valuable for sustaining changes.

On the “down side” if written policies don’t work out as expected, they are sometimes difficult to change. Planning a “trial” period before formalizing a policy is one way to work out the bugs before they become “set in stone.” Sometimes a “tradition” becomes an *informal, unwritten policy* that becomes difficult to change.

What are the written or “unwritten” policies regarding healthy eating choices in your school meal program? Are there instances where “tradition” has just become a standard practice without thought given to whether or not it is a *good* practice? How can policies create healthy traditions?

### Examples:



**Example 1:** There is a formal, written policy that all vending machines are off limits during school meal service hours to support school meal program participation and goals.

**Example 2:** Regardless of the fact that off campus lunch is allowed for junior high students, there is an unwritten policy that students are included in meal

planning to determine “favorites” and serving ideas show that the school food service listens and acts upon student feedback.

**Example 3:** There is a written policy to keep fund-raisers such as “pizza slice sales” from competing with school lunch.

### **“Collaboration” as a method for environmental change**

The potential for change is great when partners work together to share responsibilities, resources, and rewards!

#### **Examples:**



**Example 1:** A brown bag travel meal for student field trips and athletic events doesn’t have to be a bologna sandwich, chips, and pop. Teachers and coaches can collaborate with school food service staff to provide healthy choice brown bags. These serve as hands-on practice with good nutrition teaching tools.

**Example 2:** School food service staff can collaborate with the PTO to provide healthy food choices at the concessions for a parent health fair. This is a great way to assist another partner in their efforts while creating yet another healthy eating opportunity!

**Example 3:** School food service often provides meals and snacks for teacher training days. One school food service developed a healthy meal buffet in collaboration with teacher representatives *and* went a step further to provide nutrition information.

### **“Repetition” as a method for environmental change**



Giving up too soon is a common mistake when creating environmental change. Some things need repetition to “catch on.” Other times, repetition offers opportunities for improvement. With a little revision, a “disappointment” can become a success.

#### **Examples:**



**Example 1:** An announcement was made for students to sign up for tasting teams...an opportunity to taste new food products and give feedback. The

response was small, but those who participated had a great time, felt some ownership, and spread the word. Soon there was a waiting list to participate!



**Example 2:** The first time that a new and different ethnic meal was offered, many frowns were seen and “yucks” heard. Students were allowed to try a “taste” of the new food without having to take a complete portion. Food service staff surveyed the cafeteria. The next time around there was an increase in participation, and more “yums” all around!

**Example 3:** A baked potato with toppings was very well received by upper elementary students, but had a poor response from the lower elementary students. Repeating the menu with just a slight twist...potato slices rather than a “whole potato” for the younger students resulted in success!

### **“Education” as a method for environmental change**

Education is needed to create awareness and increase knowledge and skills for making healthy eating choices.

#### **Examples:**



**Example 1:** Provide school meal nutrition information in a monthly teacher newsletter to help dispel misconceptions about menu items.

**Example 2:** Display a school lunch food tray in the lunch line with information such as servings from the Food Guide Pyramid, calories, fats, sodium, portion sizes, and MORE! Standing in line for lunch is usually considered a down, or non-utilized time. Why not use it to educate and help students make better food choices?

### **“Support” as a method for environmental change**

Arranging the environment to make change easier is a key means of support. Resources and recognition are other ways the coalition can provide support.

#### **Examples:**



**Example 1:** A school board and administration that supports food service staff with time to do school meal promotions, classroom activities, and community involvement is an initiative winner!



**Example 2:** Teachers often feel that the school food meal program does not meet their personal needs for healthy food choices. An enterprising school created a survey just for teachers to find menu items that not only meets the nutritional needs of the students, but also serves to support efforts for healthy lifestyle practices by teachers. This action demonstrates collaboration as well as support to create a change!

**Example 3:** One school food service demonstrates great teamwork and support for teachers by providing “taste tests” in the classroom. Administration demonstrates support by setting up a general fund to automatically reimburse the school meal program for the costs from a pre-determined budget.

### **“Reward” as a method for environmental change**

We all like to be rewarded for the changes we make. Reward keeps us motivated. It can be in the form of recognition, or a “prize” for something well done.

#### **Examples:**



**Example 1:** Classes that exhibit the best courtesy and manners in the cafeteria are allowed extra activity time throughout the school day. This action exemplifies peer group modeling and supports the goals of the initiative.

**Example 2:** Food service staff visits classrooms to explain school meal guidelines. The students then assist in creating a class menu that is served the following month as reward for their suggestions and participation in the school meal program. Printed menus are sent home to involve parents.

**Example 3:** Students and staff are all rewarded when time is taken to create fun with theme days! Everybody has a great time when food service staff dresses up like fruits and vegetables. Pair it with a “Here’s Your 5 (fruit and vegetable) Day,” and be set for a whole day of renewed interest in healthy choices!



**Module Tip:**

Environmental changes can be very subtle, and small, but have a large impact. Healthy choices created in school menu plans, and food service activities in the classroom are new, innovative forms of environmental change.

**FAQs:**

- ❑ **Question:** School lunch has always been prepared entrees, high fat items, and fast foods. How can we change that with this initiative?

**Answer:** First, involve and support the food service director. Next, involve the students and listen to their feedback. Also educate your audience. Items perceived as being high fat items may actually be low in fat or when balanced with low fat choices, create a healthy menu.

- ❑ **Question:** All the ideas sound great, but a lot of work. How do you keep it from getting overwhelming?

**Answer:** Just as with anything else, take it one step at a time, include as many people as possible to distribute time and resources, and don't forget the importance of reward through recognition and self-satisfaction!

**This tool will help you go beyond the community review to take a closer look at school meals. Consider the following possibilities for each community group (students, teens, parents/adults, senior citizens, business and schools). Also use the information as a measure of progress.**

Teachers, administrators, and food service staff are serving as role models for healthy eating choices.

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**Teachers promote school meals in the classroom.**

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## Administrators eat school meals with students.

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The school cafeteria serves as a learning lab for healthy eating. Displays, posters, reminders are available and/or presentations/skits are performed showing appropriate

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There is a collaborative effort between the classroom and food service to create a joint message for healthy eating choices. Teachers compare school menus to the Pyramid.

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Food service staff participates in classroom learning. Lessons taught in the classroom are reinforced in the cafeteria. Students are able to help choose menus. Students take "learning tours" through food service.

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List existing opportunities in your school that are not used to their full potential.

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What are the communication, time, or location problems...or a lack of facilities or resources...that keep opportunities from being used to their full potential?

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Which resources will be needed for making changes (people, facilities, and other resources)?

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What type of support is being provided for opportunities to sustain the benefits?

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## Environmental Change Plan

School Meal Objective: Increase school lunch participation for Grades 1-5 to 90% by January 2006.

Environmental change methods planned. Check all that apply.	Actions and resources needed to implement the plan	Problems to resolve	Who takes action, and by what date?	Review— results of actions Check all that apply.
<input checked="" type="checkbox"/> Policy <input checked="" type="checkbox"/> Collaboration <input checked="" type="checkbox"/> Repetition <input checked="" type="checkbox"/> Education <input checked="" type="checkbox"/> Support <input checked="" type="checkbox"/> Reward  -or- <b>problems resolved:</b> <input type="checkbox"/> Communication <input type="checkbox"/> Time <input type="checkbox"/> Location <input type="checkbox"/> Lack of equipment <input type="checkbox"/> Other	<b>Action:</b> <i>Classroom activities presented by FS staff</i>  <b>Marketing Plan:</b> <i>Plan with teachers and send memo with dates</i> <b>Resources:</b> <i>FS staff, teachers, foods, preparation equipment, supplies for tasting, recipes, teaching activities, other education resource materials</i>  <b>Action:</b> <i>Food service staff sets up tours of the department with a nutrition education/physical activity message</i>  <b>Marketing Plan:</b> <i>Calendar to sign-up classrooms</i>  <b>Resources:</b> <i>FS Director, classroom teachers, students, vendors, taste tests</i>  <b>Action:</b> <i>Food service staff identifies classroom lessons</i>  <b>Marketing Plan:</b> <i>Memo to teachers, article in newsletter, and information on monthly school meal menus, invite administrators and newspaper</i>  <b>Resources:</b> <i>Dietitian, county extension agents, Team Nutrition, State Board of Education, Association of School Food Service Administrators</i>	Frequency, length of activities, who to do the activity, time for prep, money for tasting, planning with teachers	FS director coordinates with FS staff and teachers to develop a plan for 1 year by Sept. 20  Karen, Yolanda, and Bill plan tours and identify information by Oct. 1  Karen, Paula, and Steve plan lessons and coordinate presentations by Oct. 1	<b>Communication:</b> <input type="checkbox"/> Great marketing <input type="checkbox"/> Need M-and-M's <b>Time:</b> <input type="checkbox"/> Good timing <input type="checkbox"/> Needs work <b>Location:</b> <input type="checkbox"/> Good <input type="checkbox"/> Needs work <b>Resources:</b> <input type="checkbox"/> Feasible cost <input type="checkbox"/> Good <input type="checkbox"/> Needs work <b>Participation:</b> <input type="checkbox"/> Good <input type="checkbox"/> Needs work <b>Overall:</b> <input type="checkbox"/> Great-continue <input type="checkbox"/> Good-revise <input type="checkbox"/> Fair-revise

Comments:

**Example**



**Event Planning Tool**

**Title Of Program/Project/Event:** Fruit/Vegetable Character Theme Day

☐ Media ☒ School ☐ Business ☐ Community

**Target Audience/Numbers Forecasted:**

☒ Students 450 ☐ Parents 40 ☒ Teachers 50 ☐ School meal director and staff \_\_\_\_\_

☒ School administrators 3-5 ☐ Business/community leaders/community-at-large 1-2

**Outline/Description/Objectives:**

Participants will become aware of healthy eating ideas.

1. Create a character costume. For example, use an orange sweatshirt, orange tights, green hat, etc. for a Carruther Carrot. A purple outfit could be used for Gus Grape. A "Nutri-Bird" outfit or similar character could also be created with MUCH imagination!!!
2. Have the character carry around a Grape Basket of Purple Grape Recipes and distribute. Use your imagination--roll recipes up and tie with a "grape ribbon" to create greater interest. Have Gus sing the "Raisin" song or other made up song. Gus could also carry food samples as an option.
3. If desired, have someone taking pictures of children with "Gus" and post on a school bulletin board later. Invite the local newspaper to use "Gus" pictures or have a local celebrity have his/her picture taken with "Gus."

**Marketing Plan:** Announcement in teacher's newsletter, send invitation for parents to attend, invite administrators and town newspaper reporter

**Permits Or Permissions Required:**

**Resource Materials/Supplies/ Handouts/Food/:**

1. Food samples and/or
2. Printing costs for recipes

**Costs/Funding Source:**

Varies with costume created

**Manpower Needed:**

Varies with length of lunch  
1-3 hours

**Space/Time/Date Requirements:**

No space necessary

**Prep Time:**

Varies

**Alternate Plan:**

You may set up a booth in lieu of "wandering"

**Comments:** All went well! Plan to repeat once a year in October. Can also use this activity at a health fair.

## Chapter 6 School Meals

### Module 3: School Meal Program in Action

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#### Step Up and Step Out with School Meals

Now that there is an awareness of the importance of school meal programs and the opportunities available for making environmental change have been assessed, it's time for your coalition and school food service staff to take action.



### School meal program takes action!

There's a great new recipe that your coalition will want to try! It's called Partner Pie! It's simple, easy, and sure to be a hit in your school!



#### Partner Pie

##### *Ingredients:*

- \* Team Nutrition Initiative (1)
- \* Nutrition Advisory Councils
- \* Cafeteria Theme Days
- \* Coalition Support

##### *Recipe Directions:*

1. Gather information about the Team Nutrition Initiative, and encourage your school to become a Team Nutrition School.
2. Work with your school food service staff, administration, and teachers to create student Nutrition Advisory Councils.
3. Lend coalition support, in the form of time, money, and materials to help school food service staff create cafeteria theme days.
4. Be a cheerleader for the school meal program! Spread news of the good works!!
5. Combine all of the ingredients together in your school, and serve healthy meals, with some nutrition education on the side, and top it off with some FUN!

## Partner Pie: Team Nutrition



“Poor habits are often established during childhood. More than 60% of young people eat too much fat, and less than 20% eat the recommended number of servings of fruits and vegetables each day.” (2)

The National School Lunch Program (3), which began in 1946, was created to address the concern of poor food intake. This program is taking a **Step Up and a Step Out** and now has the goal of meeting the Dietary Guidelines for Americans. Children are offered school meals that are lower in fat and sodium, and have more variety of foods offered. To help with these healthy goals, USDA has created Team Nutrition, an initiative designed to help make implementation of changes easier and more successful.

### Team Nutrition Values (1):

Your coalition and school meal program can work together to share these Team Nutrition values:



1. Children should be empowered to make food choices that reflect the Dietary Guidelines for Americans.
2. Good nutrition and physical activity are essential to children's health and educational success.
3. School meals that meet the Dietary Guidelines for Americans should appeal to children and taste good.
4. School health programs must build upon the best science, education, communication, and technical resources available.
5. Public/private partnerships are essential to reaching children to promote food choices for a healthful diet.
6. Messages to children should be age appropriate and delivered in a language they speak, through media they use, in ways that are entertaining, and actively involve them in learning.
7. The focus should be on positive messages regarding food choices children can make.
8. It is critical to stimulate and support action and education at the national, state, and local levels to successfully change children's eating behaviors.

## Partner Pie: Nutrition Advisory Council (NAC)



Nutrition Advisory Councils (2) are more commonly called “NAC’s.” They are sponsored by the American School Food Service Association (ASFSa), a national group of school foodservice professionals who are the voice for child nutrition.

NAC groups bring students together to learn about the importance of good nutrition and physical activity and the role the school meal program plays in a healthy lifestyle. The students plan, implement and conduct activities that help the school and community to learn more about good nutrition and how to put it in practice.

NAC is also a forum to get important feedback from the students about what they like or don't like about the school meal program and suggestions for making changes to meet sound nutrition guidelines. A NAC that works hand-in-hand with the local school food service director has an exciting opportunity to make student recommendations become realities.



### What are the Goals of a NAC?



Nutrition Advisory Councils strive to:

1. Learn about and promote school meal programs with emphasis on their importance for good health, active bodies and alert minds.
2. Become an active part of a statewide NAC program.
3. Make the school meal program better to meet the needs of the entire student body.
4. Offer responsible suggestions to improve the school's health initiative.
5. Serve as a communications bridge between school meal programs, school faculty, administration, students and the community.
6. Develop a better understanding of the need for healthy eating and nutrition education in the classroom, cafeteria and community.



### Nutrition Advisory Council activities include:

- ♥ Servings as role models
- ♥ Communicating with administration and food service staff
- ♥ Planning menus based on school meal guidelines
- ♥ Making recommendations for improving school meals
- ♥ Taste Testing
- ♥ Creating Bulletin Boards
- ♥ Writing newsletter Articles
- ♥ Implementing surveys
- ♥ Raising funds for NAC activities

- ♥ Leading community services such as food drives
- ♥ Providing nutrition education for students and the community
- ♥ Decorating the dining room for special days
- ♥ Participating in ASFSA Art Contests
- ♥ Merchandising meals
- ♥ \_\_\_\_\_ (List your own ideas here!)

**Example:**



**Students Plan Grab and Go Menus**

Students at a middle school were unhappy with having to stand in the cafeteria line to wait for hot food. They wanted the option to choose a complete cold food meal that they could just “grab and go”. The food service director worked with a group of students on menu options, and the Nutrition Advisory Council took the ideas back to their homerooms for comments and suggestions. The change was a great success. Not only was there increased school lunch participation, and improved satisfaction among the middle school students, but also the food service staff felt a great reward for a job well done!

**How can you start a Nutrition Advisory Council?**



Call or write the American School Food Service Association (2) for an application. A Nutrition Advisory Council handbook is available.



**Partner Pie: School Meal Theme Days**

Theme days are the third ingredient in creating a Partner Pie, and an important ingredient your coalition will not want to leave out!

**Benefits of Theme Days**

- ♥ Opportunities are created to link the classroom, cafeteria, and community
- ♥ Food service staff have input and develop ownership in their program
- ♥ Classroom learning objectives can be met with an active, hands-on approach
- ♥ The cafeteria becomes the “where the action is,” the place to be
- ♥ Excellent marketing tools for the school meal program
- ♥ Schools report increases in school meal participation and a decrease in food waste

**Examples:**

Following are a few examples of cafeteria theme days.



**Example 1: Happy Birthday Kansas!**

- a. Plan a theme day coordinated with Kansas Day.
- b. Coordinate with classroom teachers to add a Kansas products unit the same week of the theme day. FS staff provides a lesson for this unit.
- c. Invite special guests into the classroom, or cafeteria to discuss the Kansas products they raise or grow.
- d. Include tasting of Kansas products in the classroom, or daily in the cafeteria the week of the Kansas theme day.

**Example 2: Take A Space Walk!**

- a. Coordinate with a unit on space/astronauts, etc. in the classroom.
- b. Coordinate a field trip to a Cosmosphere, or similar outing.
- c. Coordinate with an art teacher to build a space ship for display in the cafeteria.
- d. Food service staff provide a lesson on foods in space versus school lunch.
- e. Coordinate with a PE teacher to plan activities such as a moon walk.

MENU	
Lunar Chicken	Crater Taters with Milky Way Sauce
Meteorite Greens	Moon Whip
Mars Buffet	Rocket Fuel

**Example 3: Summer Is Only A Memory!**

- a. Decorate the cafeteria with kiddy pool, rubber ducky, etc.
- b. Encourage kids, teachers, and food service staff to dress in Hawaiian shirts, sunglasses, etc.
- c. Coordinate with the music teacher for Beach Boys music in the cafeteria.
- d. Have essay contests in the classroom with the topic...“My Favorite Day Last Summer”...display all the essays in the cafeteria.
- e. Coordinate with the PE teacher to have dancing the week of theme day doing some of the oldies, i.e., the swim, the jerk, and the pony.

MENU	
Bum Sandwich	Surfboard Relishes
Fruit Beach Balls	Suntan Cookies
Surfin' Goodies	Summer Suds



**Example 4: A Trip to Italy!**

- Decorate the cafeteria with artwork maps of Italy and play Italian music during lunch. If possible, have parents volunteer to come in and act as waiters.
- Discuss Italian culture, agriculture, or other topics in the classroom.
- Dance to Italian music in P.E.
- Note:** Use the idea to study any country!

**MENU**

Veggie Antipasto	Italian Pasta Feast
Italian Bread	Moo Refresher
Red, White, and Green Fruits...Strawberries, Banana, and Kiwi	

**Example 5: A Day at the Circus!**

Use your imagination....A “bear walk” in PE class...or discussion about balancing energy and eating choices “on the trapeze”...or multiply the “rings and acts” for a lesson in math!

**MENU**

Flying Trapeze Sandwich	Lion Biscuits
Clown Around Vegetables	Elephant Fruit
Dancing Bear Cookies	Universal Beverage

**Partner Pie: The Secret Ingredient**



The secret ingredient for Partner Pie is of course, **coalition support**. Without it, the pie just won't have the same flavor!

It seems to be a fact of life that we hear more about the things that are wrong than we hear about what is good. The school meal program has many challenges. As anyone knows, especially when it comes to food, you can't please all the people all of the time. Partnering creates a win/win situation with recognition and support going all directions!

**Examples** of how food service and the coalition can TEAM together to serve Partner Pie at your school:

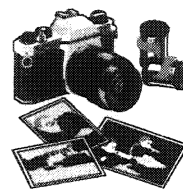


**Example 1: “Let the Good Times Roll”(3)**

“Let the Good Times Roll” was a weeklong Team Nutrition campaign, developed by the food service staff. The initiative teamed five nutrition learning concepts: variety, fats, proportion, balance, and choices with fun filled facts and activities from American history 1940’s through the 1980’s. Menu names were created to fit each decade, such as 1970’s Disco Dessert. A 70’s lesson in the classroom, presented by food service staff, was created around the concept of fats, and discussed the beginning of the fast food restaurants, the American diet today, and student ideas for adding healthy choices to their favorite restaurants menus. The week was highlighted with an all community sock hop, hosted by the coalition.

**Example 2: Make a Video or Take Pictures!**

One school took pictures of their Mexican Food Day. Food service staff dressed in costume; classrooms made giant chili peppers to decorate the cafeteria; music was played; “new” healthy foods were served; and classrooms talked about culture in Mexico. The pictures were shared at a school board meeting along with discussion about how well students accepted the new menu items, and how it linked with classroom learning. It was a fun way to build support from the school board!



**Example 3: Where’s the Beef?**

A school was using a precooked hamburger patty, containing TVP (texturized vegetable protein). Even though hamburgers are generally a student favorite, school lunch participation decreased when it was on the menu.

- ♥ The food service director held some chat sessions with students, and discovered how much they disliked the texture, odor, and flavor of the hamburger product. The director went to the local feedlot, and worked with the manager to purchase 100% fresh ground beef. She was even able to negotiate a price break for the school district!
- ♥ The coalition assisted in writing an article for the community and school newspapers highlighting the support and collaboration of the local feedlot with the needs and wants of the students.
- ♥ The food service staff and coalition also made signs and banners promoting the change, declaring, “Where’s the Beef...It’s at School!!!!” Needless to say, student participation on hamburger day picked up significantly.
- ♥ What about the calorie and fat content of that menu? The director was able to alter the other menu items being offered on that day to still meet requirements. Once again, this effort was able to support the concept that

all foods can fit, and that food service can not only meet the school lunch requirements, but the needs and wants of their patrons.

**Example 4: I'm Hungry!!**

Students sometimes go home and complain to their parents that they "don't get enough to eat at lunch". This may cause families to have misconceptions about the school meal program.

- ♥ Food service staff can use this as an opportunity to educate families about the school meal program. Presentations at PTO meetings, open house displays, and newspaper articles are good ways to reach families. An explanation of the school meal requirements, serving sizes, offer versus serve, and policies specific to the school meals/food intake can be reviewed.
- ♥ The student who is "hungry" may actually be an athlete who needs to consume more calories at breakfast, and in the evening to meet energy requirements. On the other hand, a teenage girl may only pick at her lunch because she is "counting calories" and the days till she needs to fit into that prom dress and then is hungry at night! These examples set up a great opportunity to teach parents what the recommended daily nutritional allowances are for their child. Other education opportunities include suggestions for at home snacks, quick meals on the run, and breakfast tips that can help families join food service staff in a common goal to meet the daily nutritional needs of their child.
- ♥ Coalitions can volunteer manpower and time to help with article writing, presentations to groups, and can even develop educational materials for families.



## References and Resources

- (1) For information about the promotion of healthy school meals, contact:  
USDA/Food and Consumer Service  
TEAM Nutrition  
3101 Park Center Drive, Room 802  
Alexandria, VA 22302  
(703) 305-1609  
Website Address: <http://www.fns.usda.gov/fns/>
- (2) Physical Activity and Good Nutrition: Essential Elements for Good Health, AT-A-GLANCE 2000, U.S. Department of Health and Human Services, Centers for Disease Control and Prevention. For information and copies of the document, contact Centers for Disease Control and

- Prevention, National Center for Chronic Disease Prevention and Health Promotion, Mail Stop K-46, 4770 Buford Highway NE, Atlanta, GA 30341-3717, Telephone (770)488-5820; Fax( 770)488-5473. Websites: [ccdinfo@ced.gov](mailto:ccdinfo@ced.gov); <http://www.cdc.gov/nccdphp>.
- (3) National School Lunch Program (NSLP), United States Department of Agriculture (USDA) <http://www.fns.usda.gov/cnd/lunch/>
  - (4) **American School Food Service Association (ASFSA)**  
Attn: Nutrition Advisory Council  
1600 Duke St., 7<sup>th</sup> Floor  
Alexandria, VA 22314-3436  
1-800-877-8822  
[www.asfsa.org](http://www.asfsa.org)
  - (5) "Celebrate the Century," a US POSTAL SERVICES EDUCATION SERIES. For more information call 1-800-450-4636.



**Module Tip:**

The recipe for success begins with the food service staff stepping up and out beyond meeting nutritional requirements, and partnering with students to create a win-win situation for everyone.

**FAQs:**

- ❑ **Question:** Our students complain all the time about the food. It makes it difficult to be a school food service worker.
- ❑ **Answer:** Is your food service taking an active role in meeting student needs? Do you have a NAC formed to obtain student input? Try theme days, cafeteria bulletin boards, music, and costumes, and go beyond a focus on nutritional requirements.
- ❑ **Question:** It takes time just to organize special days. Is it really necessary to take the time to fill out a planning form, too?  
**Answer:** It's true it will take a little more time, but is likely to save time in the future. People come and go, and good ideas are forgotten if not written down. Imagine, just going to a file and pulling out all of the information you need to initiate an activity! Don't forget to jot "things you might do differently next time under "Comments" so that you can start out under the best circumstances!

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**Module Glossary:**

**Team Nutrition:** A USDA initiative designed to help schools making healthy changes in the school meal plan do so easier and with more success.

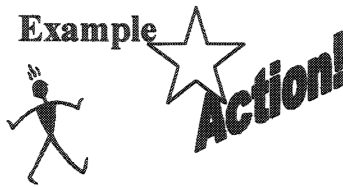
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## Environmental Change Plan

**Objective:** School Meal Objective: Increase school lunch participation for Grades 1-5 to 90% by January 2006.

Environmental change methods planned. Check all that apply.	Actions and resources needed to implement the plan	Problems to resolve	Who takes action, and by what date?	Review— results of actions Check all that apply.
<input type="checkbox"/> Policy <input checked="" type="checkbox"/> Collaboration <input type="checkbox"/> Repetition <input checked="" type="checkbox"/> Education <input type="checkbox"/> Support <input checked="" type="checkbox"/> Reward  -or- Problems resolved: <input type="checkbox"/> Communication <input type="checkbox"/> Time <input type="checkbox"/> Location <input type="checkbox"/> Lack of equipment <input type="checkbox"/> Other	<b>Action:</b> <i>Cafeteria/Classroom/PE Theme Day-- Dinosaur Cruise</i>  <b>Marketing Plan:</b> <i>To be determined</i>  <b>Resources:</b> <i>To be determined</i>		<i>Kari, Connie, and Debra will organize the day Kari will coordinate cafeteria activities by November 2, 2005</i>	<b>Communication:</b> <input type="checkbox"/> Great marketing <input type="checkbox"/> Need M-and-M's  <b>Time:</b> <input type="checkbox"/> Good timing <input type="checkbox"/> Needs work  <b>Location:</b> <input type="checkbox"/> Good <input type="checkbox"/> Needs work  <b>Resources:</b> <input type="checkbox"/> Feasible cost <input type="checkbox"/> Good <input type="checkbox"/> Needs work  <b>Participation:</b> <input type="checkbox"/> Good <input type="checkbox"/> Needs work  <b>Overall:</b> <input type="checkbox"/> Great-continue <input type="checkbox"/> Good-revise <input type="checkbox"/> Fair-revise
	<b>Action:</b> <i>PE activities</i>  <b>Marketing Plan:</b>  <b>Resources:</b> <i>Music, games and stretches</i>		<i>Debra will coordinate with PE teachers by November 2, 2005</i>	
<b>Comments:</b>				



## Event Planning Tool

**Title Of Program/Project/Event:**      **Dinosaur Craze**

☐ Media ☒ School ☐ Business ☐ Community

**Target Audience:** (check all planned for your activity)

☒ Students 580 ☐ Parents 55 ☒ Teachers 30 ☐ School meal director and staff \_\_\_\_

☒ School administrators \_\_\_\_ ☐ Business/community leaders/community-at-large \_\_\_\_

**Outline/Description/Objectives/Ideas:**

1. Coordinate with teachers so that a dinosaur unit is studied in the classroom the week of the theme day. Have this unit include the study of what dinosaurs ate, versus our nutritional needs.
2. Encourage students, teachers, and food service staff to wear dinosaur shirts on the theme day.
3. Coordinate with the music teacher to have music available during lunch.
4. Coordinate with the art teacher to let students make their own plaster dinosaur footprints.
5. Food service staff decorate the cafeteria, bulletin boards, etc. with the theme.
6. Coordinate with the PE teacher to add games, movement, stretches that week that fit the dinosaur theme.

**Marketing plan:** Announcements over the PA system; letters inviting parents

**Resource Materials/Supplies/Food/Handouts:**

Library books, art supplies, music

**Costs/Funding Source:**

Variable depending on activities selected

**Manpower Needed:**

Food service staff for lunch

Classroom/PE teacher

**Prep Time:**

Varies

**Space/Time/Date Requirements:**

Cafeteria/classroom space

**Alternate Plan:**

Use as a theme for open house, or parent visitation, and activities and snacks that revolve around the dinosaur theme.

**Comments:**


Dinosaurs seem to be a "hit" with a wide range of people, from boys to girls, from elementary age through adults, and much information exists for integration into the classroom.

Menu – Dinosaur Nuggets/Stegosaurus Fries/Jurassic Veggie Mix/Tyrannosaurus Rex Whip/ Herbivore Greens/Pterodactyl Juices

## Chapter 6 School Meals

### Module 4: School Meal Links

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 **Step Up and Step Out to find school meal links in the classroom, home, and community!**

School food service staff don't just belong in the kitchen anymore!

#### **School meal links with the classroom**

The classroom teacher is given the challenge of creating a learning environment that offers a variety of experiences for the students, meets all the academic performance outcomes, and encourages individual growth and development of life skills. School meal programs can be outstanding partners in meeting this challenge!

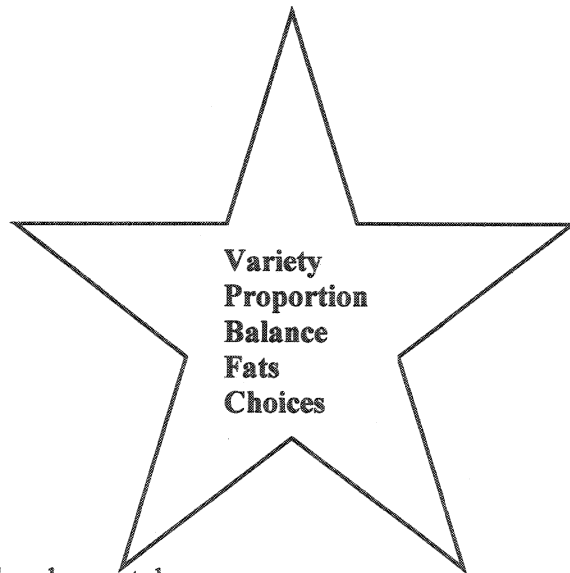


**Star 5**

Star 5 is a set of classroom activities that teach the Food Guide Pyramid and *Star 5* nutrition-learning concepts. (1)

**Each activity:**

1. Builds on the basic foundation, the Food Guide Pyramid
2. Directly involves food service staff with planning and implementing the lessons
3. Allows students to learn with an active, hands-on style
4. Utilizes the school menus as teaching tools
5. Provides a means of obtaining student feedback about school meals
6. Develops common goals between the food service staff and the classroom teachers



## Variety



### Examples:



#### Teaching Point

The school lunch menu is planned using a variety of foods each day. These foods are from the major food groups of the Food Guide Pyramid.

#### Activity 1

Have the students look at a week's school lunch menu. Using colored highlight pens, one for each major food group, have the students highlight the foods from each of the food groups. This colorful activity will point out that a variety of foods are included, not just foods in one or two groups. For the younger students, this activity could be done together as a class, with food service staff reading the menu from the chalkboard, and asking the students to identify what food group each food item belongs in. Colored chalk could be used to highlight each food on the chalkboard.

#### Activity 2

Have the students look at a school lunch menu and place the name of each menu item into the correct food group of an empty Food Guide Pyramid. If some students do not choose all the menu items, ask them to suggest another menu with items for an appropriate food group substitution. Use ideas for new menus when appropriate.

## Proportion



### Examples:



#### Teaching Point

To choose a healthy diet from the Food Guide Pyramid, we need to eat 6-11 grains, 2-4 fruits, 3-5 vegetables, 2-3 milk and dairy, and 2-3 meat servings daily.

Activity 1

Use the highlighted menus from the previous variety activity. Have the students count the number of servings offered daily from each food group, and throughout the week. Discuss why there would be more grain servings offered during the week than any other food group servings.

Activity 2

Show students the serving tools that are used in food service to make sure proper portions are given. Have students put water in each scoop and then in a measuring cup to help them see that the #16 is  $\frac{1}{4}$  cup and #8 is  $\frac{1}{2}$  cup. Display different types of foods from the Grain Group that are used in school menus. Taste breads that are made with whole wheat and with all-purpose flour. Ask students to list their favorite Grain menu items.

**Balance**



**Examples:**



Teaching Point

We need to balance the food energy, or calories we get from the foods we eat with the amount of activity we get for good health. Too many calories and not enough activity can create an unhealthy balance.

Activity 1

Set two sample plates of food, both actual meals served on the school lunch menu, in front of the students. Have the calories and fat grams labeled for each. Choose a meal that is lower in fat and calories, and another that is higher than recommendations in fat and calories to show that they can balance out to average the recommended 667 calories and 22 grams of fat guidelines for the elementary age school lunch menu.

Activity 2

Have the students participate in several forms of physical activity, such as jumping jacks, walking, and running in place. Have place cards that identify the activity and the amount of calories burned with each activity. Use potato chips, chocolate chip cookies, or another favorite to show the minutes of activity needed to balance out the energy received from the selected food item.

## Fat



### Examples:



#### Teaching Point

Fat is not all bad. It does give us food energy, and *sometimes makes* our food taste better! However, too much fat is not a good thing, and fats are sly! They often “hide” and we must learn what foods they hide in!

#### Activity 1

Make a display of food models, or actual food items. Select two student teams. Have the first team try to display the food items from the least fat, to the highest in fat. Then have team two make any changes they think need to be made in the order of the foods. Ask the remaining students in the class to then make any other needed changes. Have the foods labeled on the bottom of each food model, or have place cards with the fat gram information listed to set in front of each food. Discuss if the class was surprised by the results. Were any foods lower or higher in fat than presumed?

#### Activity 2

This activity is for younger kids who may not be able to understand the concept in the previous activity. Discuss “hidden” fats. Display several foods, and have the kids guess which ones have hidden fats. Place the food items on brown paper bags, and then look for the fat stain. Conclude with the discussion that all foods can fit in a healthy diet, but it’s important to understand where the fats are hidden.

## Choices



### Example:



#### Teaching Point

All foods can fit is a healthy concept to practice in our daily eating habits. The five major food groups are where we should choose the majority of our foods, with less fat oils and sweets for good balance.

Activity 1

Prepare and offer a snack party buffet. Allow the kids to choose items from the buffet. After they make selections, have them write the names of their choices on a blank pyramid. Ask them which food groups they chose from most, and which food groups had just a few selections. Ask them to write down food items they could select to balance their pyramid.

Activity 2

Use food models or small portions of real food to build a "mini" sample potato bar in the classroom. Ask students to choose favorite low fat food items to put on top of potatoes. Have the students record selections in the appropriate food group on a blank Food Guide Pyramid. Ask them to circle the "higher fat" choices. Discuss their answers and how their choices would fit into a healthy eating plan. Ask upper grades to determine how they would evaluate their balance. **Note:** The "mini" potato bar can include a potato wedge and teaspoon portions of chili, chopped broccoli, grated carrots, salsa, bacon bits, grated cheese, sour cream, and margarine.



## School meal programs can **BUILD** on classroom traditions

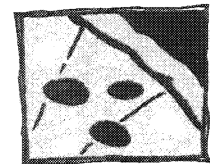
School meal links to the classroom may raise some questions. Food service staff might be concerned about having enough time and skills to step into the classroom setting. This is where the coalition can team up with the food service staff, to offer volunteer time and other resources that will make it easier.

When creating opportunities for healthy choices, it takes less time to build on tradition than to reinvent the wheel. Instead of creating something totally new or eliminating past traditions and practices, find ways to give tradition a slightly different "healthy twist!"

**Example:**



A popular incentive used in the classroom for one purpose or another is the "Pizza Party". Very often the party is held during the lunch hour and pizza is brought into the classroom from a popular food restaurant. It sounds like a good incentive, but it decreases school lunch participation, not to mention the nutritional content of the meal! Is there a way to problem-solve for a win-win situation? Here are a few suggestions. (You might come up with a few of your own!)



**Example:**



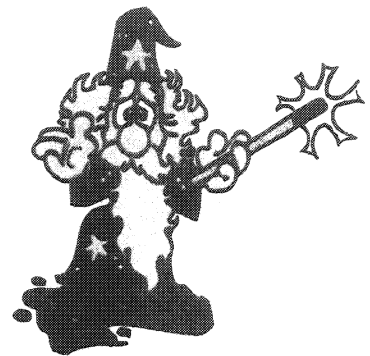
**Example 1:** Having students “stand-up” when a word is spelled correctly during a classroom lesson, reinforces the correct spelling *and* provides for movement!

**Example 2:** Combine math facts with movement, ranging from coordination and balance to cardiovascular activity! For example, have students hop four times to the math fact  $2+2 = 4$ .

## Physical activity in the classroom...a “key to learning”

Movement in the classroom was introduced as a key means of providing physical activity:

- ♥ An opportunity to incorporate different and varied teaching methods
- ♥ A learning style that makes sense to kids
- ♥ A bridge in the gap between abstract concepts, experiences, and daily living skills
- ♥ Constructive time fillers
- ♥ The potential for fewer classroom discipline problems
- ♥ The potential for improved student alertness and focus
- ♥ A means of movement and activity on days without a formal physical education class



**Examples:**



**Example 1:** What? Multiplication tables fun? An enterprising teacher integrated the learning of math concepts with physical activity on class walks in the community. As they walked, she gave students math tasks such as multiplying the number of windows in a house times the number of doors on the house, or the number of houses on the block with a garage times the number of houses with a porch. The tasks increased awareness and perception, allowed for a fun method of learning multiplication, created teamwork, and added physical activity to the school day!

**Example 2:** Ever dream of being a pioneer on the Santa Fe Trail? Students did an integrated study of the Santa Fe Trail, including the history, geography, and life and times of the pioneers. One recess period each day was spent walking and plotting the distance traveled on the Santa Fe Trail map. As destinations were reached, these communities were studied, and cooperative games played to celebrate successfully reaching each destination along the trail. (See Resources for information on how to order Santa Fe Trail teaching materials.)

**Example 3:** How about science in the swimming pool? A PE teacher taught a basic science concept on buoyancy during swimming classes. The physical educator, encouraging family involvement, gave a take-home assignment for each student to use household materials to build a small boat. Upon completion of boat building, the students attempted to sail their boats in the pool. While the class treaded water, the boats were raced, and students were engaged in discussions about why some boats sailed, sank or simply floated. Three missions were accomplished with this lesson: 1) cardiovascular endurance was increased by having students tread water; 2) a science lesson was taught on buoyancy; and 3) a family link was created.

## ☆ CLASS ACT ☆



Created for teachers, by teachers, “CLASS ACT” is a collection of innovative activities for promoting physical activity in the classroom. “CLASS ACT” doesn’t replace PE in the school’s curriculum; it simply adds more opportunities for movement and physical activity within the school day.

“CLASS ACT” provides classroom teachers with fun and easy-to-use transitional and integrated activities. The activities are aligned with state education outcome standards for Kansas. CLASS ACT has used standards to emphasize the focus on improvement of student academic performance and to demonstrate how physical activity can play an important role in meeting learning goals. In addition, CLASS ACT provides activities to enhance activity during recess and through multicultural activities.

“CLASS ACT” provides an opportunity for your coalition to work closely with your school staff to create and implement an exciting and unique educational program that builds increased physical activity into the school day. Help your school add new meaning to classroom content that’s a “CLASS ACT.” (2)

**“CLASS ACT” examples:**



**1<sup>st</sup> grade activity:** Pattern Partners

**Integrated idea:** Math

**Materials needed:** None

**How to...**

- Children select a partner
- One child comes up with a pattern using different movements and rhythms (i.e., hop, hop, clap – hop, hop, clap)
- The other partner will repeat the pattern
- After a few seconds, have partners switch rolls

**Outcome:** The student will increase problem-solving strategies by using patterning skills.



**2<sup>nd</sup> and 3<sup>rd</sup> grade activity:** Synonym Song

**Integrated idea:** Communications

**Materials needed:** Music—“The Bear Went Over the Mountain” Song

**How to...**

- Sing the Bear Went Over the Mountain
- Change words—bear to grizzly, or bruin; mountain to hill, or cliff, etc
- Do mountain climber exercises while singing

**Outcome:** The student will identify synonyms



**4<sup>th</sup> and 5<sup>th</sup> grade activity:** Math Hopscotch

**Integrated idea:** Math

**Materials needed:** Hopscotch Grid (either outside or taped to floor of the classroom) and a rock

**How to...**

Put numbers inside the squares that fit your lesson

**Example:** Factors of 35 (1, 5, 7, 35)

When a student lands in a square, he/she has to give the correct answer to be able to continue

**Example:** Math facts  $5 \times 7 = 35$

Play in pairs if possible

**Outcome:**

The student will review math facts



### Physical activity links to school food service:

What better way to demonstrate the connection between healthy eating and physical activity than by linking with school meals?

School food service staff can:

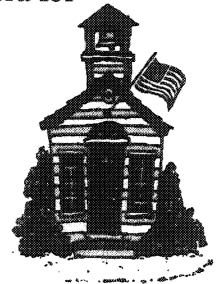
- ♥ Encourage and motivate students to try new foods and new activities
- ♥ Offer opportunities for students to make eating and physical activity choices
- ♥ Create healthy snacking opportunities at activity events
- ♥ Promote healthy eating choices for the student athlete
- ♥ Provide education to dispel sports nutrition misinformation
- ♥ Provide messages about nutrition and physical activity on school announcements and in newsletters
- ♥ Follow and demonstrate eating patterns of recognized athletes

#### Examples:



**Example 1:** I'm hungry! Let's eat! Partner with school food service to provide healthy sack lunches or snacks for activities or field days.

**Example 2:** "Moo've and Groo've!" School food service links with teachers to hold a "Moo've and Groo've" sock hop with dances, games, and healthy snacks...oh, and milk mustaches for everyone! Don't forget the camera for this one!



### Physical activity links with school faculty and staff

Kids spend a high percentage of their day with adults who are connected with the school in some form or another. *Step Up and Step Out* even a little more by increasing opportunities for these potential role models to make healthy choices.

Ideas to link with staff:

- ♥ Conduct health risk screenings
- ♥ Initiate a staff wellness program, individualized for staff needs and wants
- ♥ Provide incentives for participation in wellness activities
- ♥ Provide speakers for staff meetings or articles in staff newsletters
- ♥ Provide equipment, and an area for staff to be active at school

- ♥ Make healthy snacks and beverages available for those participating in activities
- ♥ Provide and encourage time for physical activity within the school day

## Physical activity links the school and the community



Involve anyone and everyone in the community to increase physical activity! Everything from new playground equipment at the park to a game of volleyball after the city council meeting will model or increase opportunities for physical activity! Think outside the school; support highly visible community members such as government and business leaders in their efforts to model healthy activity.

### Example:



Mayors Deedee Corradini (Salt Lake City) and Jerry Brown (Oakland, CA) visited with students from Oakland. The mayors talked with students, led them in activity, and challenged them to give up one hour of watching television each day. The event was presented during the United States Conference of Mayors as a component of its "Year of the Youth in our Cities." (3)

Use your imagination and potential partners the coalition identified earlier as valuable resources to increase opportunities for physical activity!

### Good possibilities include:

- ♥ Exercise physiologists, sports medicine specialists
- ♥ Wellness centers
- ♥ University or college student athletic programs
- ♥ Universities or colleges with departments of physical education, health education, or exercise physiology
- ♥ YMCAs or YWCAs
- ♥ Local recreation departments
- ♥ Semi-pro or pro athletes
- ♥ Students themselves serving as role models for adults

**Examples:**



**Example 1:** Rah-Rah! At one school, the cheerleading squad led community supporters in stretches during half time at football and basketball games. Not only was the crowd more enthusiastic the second half, they consumed fewer empty calories at half time!

**Example 2:** An annual event at an elementary school links college athletes with students to teach sports skills. Baseball, basketball, rowing, hockey, and soccer athletes demonstrate their skills, and then participate with the students in the games! It is hard to tell who has more fun, the athletes, or the students!

**Example 3:** At another school, college tennis athletes come each year to demonstrate skills. The elementary school students are excited having a college student at the school, and there is a potential to create more interest in a lifetime sport.

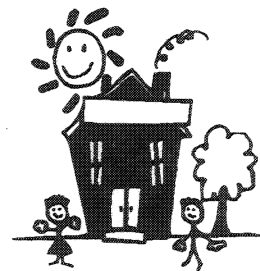
**Example 4:** Aah, Aah, KANSAS! In the State of Kansas, Kids Fitness Day, (4) is a statewide event sponsored by the Kansas Fitness Council/Kansas Department of Health and Environment. The event is hosted in various communities across the state for third graders. Students from around the state are invited to various areas for a full day of fun, physical activity, and a chance to make new friends!

**Example 5:** The Kansas (and other states) Department of Transportation helps communities build pedestrian and bike paths through grants. For additional information, contact the Kansas Department of Transportation, Office of Engineering Support, Topeka, Kansas.

## **Linking physical activity in schools with parents**

There are no more valuable resources or role models than parents. Make every effort to include them as partners each step of the way! Find creative ways to reach parents through:

- ♥ School programs that incorporate physical activity
- ♥ Home work that includes parent participation
- ♥ Inviting parents to be volunteers. Show appreciation for involvement
- ♥ Articles, newsletters, and videos to increase knowledge and skills



**Examples:**



**Example 1:** What? Attend your son's school program and stretch, or play a game? One school hosts a physical education school program, a night of physical activity and fun for all in attendance. The program showcases concepts and skills the students are developing at school and involves Mom and Dad in goal setting!

**Example 2:** A new playground was just not in the budget for one school, so the coalition teamed up during the summer with the faculty, students, parents, and community at large to sponsor a "Walk All Over You!" challenge. Civic groups, businesses, classrooms, and individuals challenged each other to walk the greatest number of miles in a set time frame, with donation to the playground fund as the entry. The effort raised over \$5,000 and many smiles on the faces of children when they arrived at school in the fall!



**Linking classroom, physical education, and school food service**

Repetition changes the environment, when the same healthy choice idea is repeated in multiple environments at the same time!

**Examples:**



**Example 1:** The color orange was enough to get a creative school thinking. They planned a day that linked healthy eating and physical activity in the classroom, food service, and PE. Oranges were discussed and tasted in the classroom, and then served for school lunch. "Orange relays" were run during PE (using plastic oranges), and recipes using oranges were sent home with incentives for the students to try a recipe (with a parent's help). Students shared result of at home tasting with fellow students.

**Example 2:** The "Celebrate the Century" (4), free education materials from the U.S. Postal Service provided a great foundation for a classroom curriculum that took a field trip through the past century. This idea was used to build in a decade of "school lunch theme" days at one school. There were activities in the classroom, and a highlight was an all school-parent 50's sock hop, complete with hula hoop and twist activities.

## Linking the Changes



*"If we could give every individual the right amount of nourishment and exercise, not too little, and not too much, we would have found the safest way to health."*

Hippocrates

Recalling that the ancient Greek philosopher Hippocrates linked healthy minds with healthy bodies so long ago makes us even more aware of the continued need to work toward this goal as we travel through the 21<sup>st</sup> Century.

Challenge your community to ***Step Up and Step Out*** to adopt a philosophy that supports increased opportunities for physical activity and healthy eating.



## References and Resources

- (1) Teaching Elementary Physical Education, January 1999, "*Physical Education in the Classroom...You've got to be Kidding!*" by Deborah A. Stevens-Smith.
- (2) Class Act. For additional information contact Paula Marmet, Director of the Kansas Bureau of Health Promotion, 109 S.W. 9<sup>th</sup> St, Suite 605, Topeka, Kansas 66612, (785) 296-5589, or visit Kansas State Department of Health and Environment Home Page <http://www.kdhe.state.ks.us/bhp/>.
- (3) U.S. Mayor Article: Oakland Kids Workout with Mayors Corradini and Brown. Available on website: [www.usmayors.org/uscm/us\\_mayor\\_newspaper/documents/4\\_5\\_99/oakland\\_other.htm](http://www.usmayors.org/uscm/us_mayor_newspaper/documents/4_5_99/oakland_other.htm). Accessed online 7/6/00.
- (4) Kid's Fitness Day. For additional information contact Paula Marmet, Director of the Kansas Bureau of Health Promotion, 109 S.W. 9<sup>th</sup> St, Suite 605, Topeka, Kansas 66612, (785) 296-5589, or visit Kansas State Department of Health and Environment Home Page <http://www.kdhe.state.ks.us/bhp/>.
- (5) "Celebrate the Century," a US POSTAL SERVICES EDUCATION SERIES. For more information call 1-800-450-4636.

- ♥ Hold the party in the afternoon and serve pizza as a snack.
- ♥ Have the students develop a recipe for a healthier version pizza, and make it themselves, with the help of the food service staff.
- ♥ Have students, working with food service staff, create a school lunch menu to include the pizza. It can still be served in the classroom.

Another tradition to BUILD on is the unity or team feeling, student pride, and ownership created in the classroom environment.

**Example:**

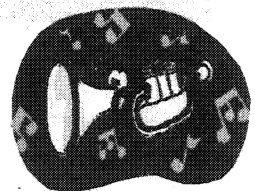


**“Our” Menu**

Involvement in decision-making goes a long way to develop ownership in a program, project, or event. The food service staff at an elementary school spent time in the classroom explaining the school lunch requirements, and requesting menu ideas from the students. The class democratically nominated menu items, and then voted using a written ballot, to determine the “winning” class menu. The published monthly calendar of menus identified the class that created that day’s menu and the meal was served to the entire district. It was amazing to watch students who generally did not try certain food items do so on “Our Menu” day, even if it was an item they reportedly did not like or even vote for. This was ownership and teamwork at its best!

***School meal program links with administration  
and school board***

We usually need to “blow our own horns” for people to learn about the great things we are doing!



If there are things getting in the way of accomplishing our goals, it should be seen as an opportunity. It is a chance to link with other partners to make a difference, not a problem. If the people who can solve the problems aren’t aware of our issues, as well as our initiative goals, things aren’t likely to change! Here are some examples of creating administrative awareness and links.

**Show and Tell Example:**



**Plan a Walk through the Food Service Department**

- ♥ Set dates with administration for a walk through of your department. You determine the frequency needed – once a month, once a year, or somewhere in-between!
- ♥ Determine a list of items you would like to discuss in advance of the date scheduled. Don't make it "problem heavy". Always include some of the good things that are happening!
- ♥ One week before the date scheduled, send a note, or e-mail to the administrator confirming the date. Include an agenda of items you would like to discuss so that your administrator can plan his/her time appropriately.



**Step Up and Step Out in school meal roles!**

Walk your board and administration a few steps further...ask them to **Step and Step Out** into new shoes, and enter the world of the school meal program.

Use the following role-play for school administrators and/or board members to experience a "typical school meal day!"

1. Post the "problems" listed in the following table around the food service department, i.e., place a note in the cook's area about unfrozen hamburger and a note on the freezer about temperature problem. You will discuss these problems and the problem-solving process as you "walk" through the department.
2. Literally ask the board members, and administration to don aprons, and hairnets, and step through the food service department doors. Ask them how they would resolve the problems. Use information in the following table to lead them in a discussion about how they would handle the situations listed if they were the foodservice staff.
3. Discuss the "Lessons to Share" that follow the table. Encourage support for staff training and support. Showcase the things that are currently working very well!

## Role-Play

**Scene:** Happy Times Elementary Food Service Department

**Time:** 7 AM

Situation	Discussion
Cooks discover the hamburger for spaghetti has not been pulled and thawed for today's lunch menu.	<b>Food and equipment issues:</b> Is there time to get meat thawed? Is use of a microwave feasible? Is there any leftover browned hamburger, or sauce in the freezer? Could fresh, thawed hamburger be purchased locally? Are there items on hand to change the menu and still meet the requirements?
A note is found on the manager's desk requesting coffee and cookies for a special board meeting at 10 AM today!	<b>Policy issues:</b> Are there policies regarding service for ancillary events? What is the time required for notification for such an event? What is on hand that could be served for this meeting? Should food service refuse to grant this last minute request? What could be done to help prevent such a situation from occurring again?
The walk-in freezer temperature is found to be 25 degrees (it should be below 0 degrees) when checking temperatures.	<b>Management issues:</b> Has there been a reoccurring problem? Has this been identified previously, but ignored? Are there any food items at risk at this point? How much time will elapse before the maintenance staff has time to evaluate the situation? Is there a plan in place for what needs to be done when such a problem arises?
Tomorrow is the day for a special promotional display in the cafeteria to promote milk, and no one has volunteered to help with this added task.	<b>Teamwork, training, and staffing issues:</b> What individuals or groups were involved in the planning of this activity? Was the time frame such that it allowed ample time to complete the task? Has adequate communication occurred to make sure this activity can be completed as planned? Have foodservice staff and teachers received training and education regarding the value of marketing the school lunch program? Has food service staff been involved in the planning, and decision making to encourage their desire to be involved? Is the department adequately staffed to handle all the daily responsibilities, plus take on the added tasks of marketing the program?

**Lessons to Share:**

- ♥ There are many solutions to a problem, depending on the situation, circumstances, time frame, and individuals involved. Creative thinking is an important skill.
- ♥ Collaboration, communication, and cooperation among departments within the school are essential for efficient operation.
- ♥ Timelines and planning are critical to the effective functioning of food service, but they do not eliminate crisis, or uncontrollable situations from occurring.
- ♥ Team efforts within and outside the department provide the best opportunities for the school meal program to be all it can be.

*Good luck to the school board and administration as they take a walk through the food service department, wearing their new shoes!*



**Example:**



**Food Always Gets Attention**

Does your food service staff provide snacks for board meetings? Have the board taste the wonderful changes you are making. Chocolate chip cookies were a favorite at the meetings of one school board, but alas, they were very high in fat. To demonstrate how small steps can be taken to reduce fat, without noticeable changes in taste, the food service staff worked on this recipe. They were able to come up with a cookie that was not only lower in fat, but they were confident, it also tasted better! They had students taste test to compare the original and lower fat cookies. The students voted overwhelmingly for the lower fat cookie! The food service staff then had the board do a taste comparison at their next meeting. What were the results? You guessed it, the board voted overwhelmingly for the lower fat cookie! Because of this activity, the board recognized why staff time was being spent on recipe development, as well as classroom activity preparation and presentation. And they were able to taste the results of all the efforts!

- ♥ Take a sample of a food you have made more nutritious, e.g., by lowering the fat to a school board meeting
- ♥ Let the school board taste test the product
- ♥ Show the board the nutrient changes from the original to the healthier version

## **School meal program links with parents**



Links with parents or family units are some of the most difficult to form. The things that increase the potential for creating strong links throughout the school and community are:

### **Find convenient hours for meetings...or make the most of the parent contact times**

#### **Example:**



Make the school meal program visible during school activities. Find ways to market the school meal program during school open houses or parent/teacher conferences. Demonstrate a taste-test and have parents give feedback on new products or product revisions. Provide healthy snacks with recipes!

### **Be accessible**

#### **Example:**



Invite family members to have lunch with kids when monthly birthday parties are celebrated in the cafeteria...complete with balloons, clowns, and music. Don't forget the camera...if expenses allow, post the picture on the bulletin board and give a copy to the family.

### **Discuss issues using familiar terms rather than educational or other unfamiliar "jargon"**

#### **Example:**



Instead of saying that menus "meet requirements" explain the requirements. Explain other "jargon" such as "a la carte," reimbursable, NAC, YAC, standardized, offer vs. serve, food-based, and components.

## **Include parents in identifying change actions to develop good teamwork**

### **Examples:**



**Example 1:** Survey parents about the meal program and menu items...don't forget to give them feedback about how their comments will be used when the information is reviewed!

**Example 2:** Write a school meal program column in school newsletters for parents. It is a valuable manner of contact! It is also helpful to provide videos or audiotapes in different languages rather than written material only, whenever possible. Identify and provide information that addresses family concerns.

## **“Pay” parent volunteers by providing them with new skills and knowledge**

### **Example:**



Present an informative talk at a PTO meeting to explain the school meal program. Have parents choose a menu that meets guidelines with foods they like! Add menus parents selected to next month's plan!

## **Find ways to show appreciation**

### **Examples:**



**Example 1:** Recognize parents who contribute menus in the above example by putting their name in a newsletter or on the monthly menus that are sent home.

**Example 2:** Recognize parents by inviting them to a “Breakfast of Champions!” Find support to absorb the cost and have classes take turns inviting parents each week so that it is not overwhelming! Have Healthy Holly and Wade Well provide a fun activity such as “champion” movements and breakfast tips.

## **The school meal program links with community**

Once food service staff becomes comfortable with interacting with teachers, students, administrators, and school board members, an unlimited number of opportunities are opened! These opportunities often lead to activities beyond the school walls, into the community! What marketing potential for the school meal program and the entire school!

### **Examples:**



#### **LEAN Track Meet**

Each Spring a school holds an annual LEAN Kids Track Meet, a modified version of a traditional track meet. Similar track and field events are held, but without the winning and losing philosophy. Kids are encouraged to do their personal best, supported with the idea that everyone is a winner when you try. The only comparison is the opportunity for students to check their own times and scores with previous personal scores to look for improvement. Parents, grandparents, and pre-school age brothers and sisters are invited to attend, and participate. School food service staff provides a healthy brown bag lunch for all students, and their family "team mates". Mom relays are held with much excitement! Community businesses get involved by supporting the event with healthy snacks, and even running a few races of their own!!!



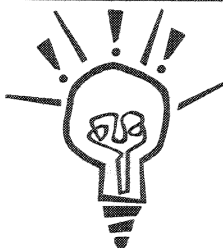
#### **Awareness Walks**

Have school food service staff host a "Kids' Booth" at "walkathons." Awareness raising walks for heart disease, cancer, and other chronic diseases provide opportunities for staff to present fun, healthy eating/physical activities for kids. Hosting a booth also provides an opportunity to explain how the school meal program may help children decrease their risk for heart disease and some types of cancer when they become adults.



## **References and Resources**

- (1) Star 5 are lessons developed for food service staff by Claudia Hohnbaum, MA, RD, LD and Vickie James, RD, LD using the concepts of the Pyramid Pursuit Curriculum. Pyramid Pursuit, developed by the National Food Service Management Institute, the University of Mississippi, P.O. Drawer 188, University, Mississippi 38677-0188, March 1994. 1-800-321-3054.



### Module Tip:

The school meal program is EVERYWHERE you go, not just in the kitchen anymore! The links created between school meals and other partners are steps towards creating a successful initiative!

### FAQs:

- ❑ **Question:** Our food service staff just hasn't had experience in the classroom or meeting the community. How can we support them to take a step up and step out?  
**Answer:** Doing something different isn't always comfortable at first, but often becomes easier and enjoyable with repetition. Repeated efforts help, but when food service staff step up and step out it is important for administrators/school board, teachers, parents, students, and the community to show appreciation.
- ❑ **Question:** Where can we find activities for food service staff to use?  
**Answer:** Check resources found throughout the manual, but most importantly, keep in mind that activities can be very simple. An important outcome is increased contact with students. Food service staffs are comfortable explaining the mechanics of the school meal program, i.e., can sizes, serving utensils, and USDA nutrient and meal plan requirements.

### Module Glossary:

**Balance:** Eat a variety of foods in moderation, and balance this with regular physical activity.

**Choices:** Make healthy food choices from the major Pyramid Food Groups with less fats, oils, and sweets for good balance.

**Fat:** Recognize the sources of fat in your diet, and limit these sources when making your food choices.

**Proportion:** Choose foods from all five major food groups; choose more servings from the Grain, Vegetable, and Fruit groups than the other Pyramid groups.

**Star 5:** Classroom activities that teach the Food Guide Pyramid and 5 basic nutrition concepts.

**Variety:** Eat a variety of foods each day to best meet your calorie and nutritional needs.



### Check School Meal “Linking” Actions

1. Use your Environmental Change Plan to check actions for school meal links.
2. Identify which of the following links are addressed in the plans.
3. Write down ideas for missing links and incorporate them into your plans as possible.

Links with the Classroom:

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Links with the Physical Activity:

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Links with Administration/School Board:

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Links with Parents:

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Links with the Community:

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## Environmental Action Plan

Objective: By 2006 the coalition will plan four events/programs that link school meals with policy makers.

Environmental change methods planned. Check all that apply.	Actions and resources needed to implement the plan	Problems to resolve	Who takes action, and by what date?	Review— results of actions Check all that apply.
<input checked="" type="checkbox"/> Policy <input checked="" type="checkbox"/> Collaboration <input type="checkbox"/> Repetition <input checked="" type="checkbox"/> Education <input checked="" type="checkbox"/> Support <input checked="" type="checkbox"/> Reward  -Or- <b>Problems resolved:</b> <input type="checkbox"/> Communication <input type="checkbox"/> Time <input type="checkbox"/> Location <input type="checkbox"/> Lack of equipment <input type="checkbox"/> Other	<b>Action:</b> <i>School Board Meeting</i>  <b>Marketing Plan:</b> <i>Take the first step to recognition by getting on the school board agenda</i>  <b>Resources:</b> <i>School meal information</i>	<i>Getting on the agenda in advance</i>	<i>Joan, Dawn, and John plan and support the school board presentation by February 4, 2006</i>	<b>Communication:</b> <input type="checkbox"/> Great marketing <input type="checkbox"/> Need M-and-M's <b>Time:</b> <input type="checkbox"/> Good timing <input type="checkbox"/> Needs work <b>Location:</b> <input type="checkbox"/> Good <input type="checkbox"/> Needs work <b>Resources:</b> <input type="checkbox"/> Feasible cost <input type="checkbox"/> Good <input type="checkbox"/> Needs work <b>Participation:</b> <input type="checkbox"/> Good <input type="checkbox"/> Needs work <b>Overall:</b> <input type="checkbox"/> Great-continue <input type="checkbox"/> Good-revise <input type="checkbox"/> Fair-revise
	<b>Action:</b> <i>Identify meals to present</i>  <b>Marketing Plan:</b> <i>Enlist the support of a dietitian</i>  <b>Resources:</b> <i>Nutrient information</i>		<i>Joan works with the dietitian to identify meals and determine fat/sugar grams by February 27, 2006</i>	
	<b>Action:</b> <i>Identify school meal data and changes</i>  <b>Marketing Plan:</b> <i>Develop attention-getting presentation</i>  <b>Resources:</b> <i>See the event planning tool</i>	<i>Identify method(s) for data collections</i>	<i>Joan, Dawn, and John identify and develop items of interest to school board</i>	

Comments:

Example



## Event Planning Tool

**Title Of Program/Project/Event:** School Meals at the School Board

☐ Media ☒ School ☐ Business ☐ Community

**Target Audience:** (check all planned for your activity)

☐ Students ☐ Parents ☐ Teachers ☐ School meal director and staff

☒ School administrators 3-5 ☒ Business/community leaders/community-at-large 10-15

**Outline/Description/Objectives/Ideas:**

School Board will be able to identify school meal actions to increase participation with healthy meals.

- A. School meal director presents: 1. A typical "sack" lunch from home; 2. A typical a la carte meal; 3. A typical reimbursable meal
- B. Sugar and fat content of meals are demonstrated using sugar cubes and tablespoons of margarine (or shortening).
- C. The director explains the steps that are being taken to improve student health risks by increasing participation in the school meal program (NAC or YAC groups, decreased time standing in line for meals, theme days, links with classrooms/PE, and other actions).

**Marketing Plan:** Invite local media/newspaper to school board meeting

**Resource Materials/Supplies/Food/Handouts:**

Food/menu items, sugar, fat, and resources for determining fat/sugar grams

**Costs/Funding Source:**

Cost of food

**Manpower Needed:**

Director to present

**Space/Time/Date Requirements:**

Early request to be placed on school board  
Agenda

**Prep Time:**

Time to prepare items and  
measure fat

**Alternate Plan:**

Not necessary

**Comments:** This may be more effective if cards identifying the total grams of fat and sugar are included.

## Chapter 6 School Meals

### Module 5: Measuring Success

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#### Step Up and Step Out to measure results

Your coalition will review the school meal component of the community review to help plan school meal actions that provide a place to practice healthy eating and reinforce healthy eating messages. Use information from the community review to:

- ♥ Identify strengths and areas for development in the school meal program
- ♥ Determine a starting point by which to determine success
- ♥ Establish goals
- ♥ Check progress in meeting goals



#### Measures

To measure success of school meal programs, consider the types of actions that are used to create a consistent healthy eating message. Measure the number of links formed with other components. It will give an indicator of the support, collaboration, and communication network being formed.

#### Develop and implement school policies that make healthful foods widely available

##### Example of measures:



1. An increase in the number of healthy foods offered
2. An increase in the number of unfamiliar and culturally diverse low fat foods offered

3. An increase in food service purchases reflecting healthy food consumption, i.e., an increase in fruit and vegetables eaten

### **Educate parents about the value of school meals**

#### **Examples of measures:**



An increase in the number of actions taken to send health messages to parents:

- a. Homework assignments
- b. Presentations at PTO meetings
- c. Newsletter articles

### **Provide resources for nutrition information and services**

#### **Examples of measures:**



An increase in the number of nutrition information resources obtained referred to and used by others

- a. Food Guide Pyramid Posters
- b. 5-A-Day materials
- c. County Extension information

### **Keep staff informed about the importance of healthy school meals**

#### **Examples of measures:**



An increase in the number of times healthy school meal information is communicated to staff

- a. Presentations/in-services
- b. Newsletters
- c. Updates at staff meetings

## **Involve students in planning to build interest and tasting of healthy foods offered**

### **Examples of measures:**



1. Increased student participation through NAC groups or other means
2. An increase in the number of student surveys and changes based on survey recommendations

## **Have staff role model healthy eating choices**

### **Examples of measures:**



1. An increase in the frequency of role modeling
2. An increase in visibility/number of role models through discussion, newsletter articles, and by other means

## **Other measures**

Sometimes measures of success are determined by how many of the “problems” that *prevent* success are eliminated!

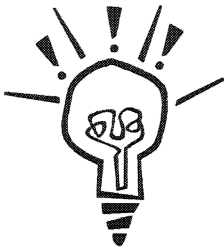


Remember to identify and record current problems to provide a basis for measuring change.

The following factors are indicators of progress when problems are resolved.

1. **Communication:** Are actions communicated to everyone involved in plans? Is there good awareness of the event, program, or action?
2. **Time:** Is there good timing with all that is going on surrounding the action? Is another event or program being held at the same time?
3. **Location:** Is the program or event held in a location convenient to participants?
4. **Resources:** Is the action cost feasible and cost effective? Were there enough supplies, equipment or people available to initiate the action?

5. **Participation:** What factors may have contributed to the success/failure of the action? Were there too many other events/programs occurring at the same time?
6. **Overall:** Should the action be repeated? If it was a success was it successful considering the resources used? If it was a failure, should revisions be made, and then the action be repeated?



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**Module Tip:**

Measure the number of links formed with other components! It will show progress with support, collaboration, and communication!

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**FAQs:**

- **Question:** Everyone looks at student participation in the reimbursable school meal program as the true measure of success. Why track anything else?  
**Answer:** Participation in the program may be the ultimate goal but everyone needs to break goals down into smaller measurable steps to stay motivated. Besides, other goals are desirable such as education and increased opportunities for healthy, well-liked choices!



## School Meal Measures Checklist

- ☐ Actions planned for the school meal program on the VMSSOA Plan are reviewed and measures are identified for each action.
- ☐ Develop measures for the actions planned above.

**Examples:**

**Action:** *Hold monthly NAC meetings.*

**Measure:** *Track and record the number of NAC meetings actually held in a year.*

**Action:** *Increase the number of healthy choices provided in the a la carte line.*

**Measure:** *Log the type and number of changes made.*

**Action:** *Students help plan school meal menus.*

**Measure:** *a. Record the number of menus planned.*

*b. Record participation one of the days these menus are served and compare to average daily participation.*

- ☐ Identify a person who will be responsible for collecting nutrition education action information.

**Person responsible:** \_\_\_\_\_

- ☐ Identify the methods that will be used for measuring/tracking information.
- ☐ Determine a schedule for reporting results to the coalition specified in the coalition's timeline.
- ☐ Include the reporting schedule in the coalition's timeline.

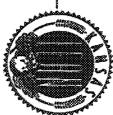
**Notes:**

**Component: School Meals****Example of how measures are indicated**

<b>Factors</b>	<b>Initial Status</b>	<b>Actions Planned</b>	<b>Results Demonstrated</b> Specify # actions taken, changes, or comments
1. Students are given adequate time to eat meals in a pleasant, safe environment	<input type="checkbox"/> Strength <input checked="" type="checkbox"/> Develop Date 6/05	<b>Example:</b> Work with administrators and school board to increase the time allowed and the number of service times during lunch by 9/05	<input checked="" type="checkbox"/> <b>In progress</b> Example of measures (steps towards goal): Number of meetings scheduled with administrators and school board. An increase in the number of minutes lunch is served. An increase in the number of meal service times.
2. School meal environment promotes a healthy eating message by using menu choices, bulletin boards, special activities, and music among other things	<input type="checkbox"/> Strength <input checked="" type="checkbox"/> Develop Date 6/05	<b>Example:</b> Make cafeteria brighter with paint and bulletin boards by 2/06	<input type="checkbox"/> <b>In progress</b> Example of measures: Painting the cafeteria. Adding bulletin boards. The number of times the bulletin board is replaced. The number of times students help design and replace the bulletin boards.
3. School meal rules discourage philosophies such as "The Clean Plate Club," and the use of food as reward or punishment	<input type="checkbox"/> Strength <input checked="" type="checkbox"/> Develop Date _____	No current action planned	<input type="checkbox"/> <b>In progress</b>
4. Student feedback is used to increase satisfaction and participation, by using Nutrition Advisory Committees, or other methods, including taste testing	<input type="checkbox"/> Strength <input checked="" type="checkbox"/> Develop Date 6/05	<b>Example:</b> Expand current NAC activities by having students plan menus based on school meal plan guidelines by 10/05	<input type="checkbox"/> <b>In progress</b> Example of measure: The number of menus students plan.
5. The sale of foods high in fat, sodium, and added sugars on school grounds and as part of fundraising activities is discouraged	<input type="checkbox"/> Strength <input checked="" type="checkbox"/> Develop Date 6/06	<b>Example:</b> Form a task group to work with administrators and fundraising groups to identify other fundraising activities by 3/06	<input type="checkbox"/> <b>In progress</b> Example of a measure: A decrease in the number of high fat/sugar fundraisers.
6. School meals are coordinated with classroom nutrition education to reinforce learning and increase awareness of healthy eating choices	<input checked="" type="checkbox"/> Strength <input type="checkbox"/> Develop Date _____		<input type="checkbox"/> <b>In progress</b>

Step Up and Step Out... School Meals

School Meal Factors	Status	Actions Planned	Results demonstrated Specify # actions taken, changes, or comments
7. Theme days, and special menus are used to increase participation	<input type="checkbox"/> Strength <input checked="" type="checkbox"/> Develop Date 6/05	<b>Example:</b> Plan a minimum of 4 theme meals with collaborative effort that link classroom, school meals, and P.E. by 12/05	<input type="checkbox"/> In progress Example of measures: The number of people involved on the planning team. The number of theme meals initiated. The number of links formed for each theme meal
8. School meal choices for reimbursable and a la carte items reflect all federal and state school healthy eating guidelines	<input type="checkbox"/> Strength <input checked="" type="checkbox"/> Develop Date 6/05	<b>Example:</b> Add lower fat/sugar a la carte choices by 10/05	<input type="checkbox"/> In progress Example of measure: The number of lower fat/sugar choices added.
9. School food service markets the program to students, parents, faculty, administration, and community through a variety of methods, including newsletters and parent meal invitations	<input type="checkbox"/> Strength <input checked="" type="checkbox"/> Develop Date 6/05	<b>Example:</b> Explore feasibility of having middle school students design and write the newsletter by 9/05	<input type="checkbox"/> In progress Example of measure: The number of students involved in writing the newsletter. The number of newsletters created.
10. School staff model personal healthy eating and physical activity choices	<input type="checkbox"/> Strength <input checked="" type="checkbox"/> Develop Date 6/05	<b>Example:</b> Determine incentives for food service staff to plan and participate in the staff wellness program by 10/05	<input type="checkbox"/> In progress Example of measure: The number of opportunities offered for staff involvement in the wellness program; the number of incentives offered; the number of modeling examples participants provide.
11. Administration supports the above factors	<input type="checkbox"/> Strength <input checked="" type="checkbox"/> Develop Date 6/05	<b>Example:</b> The coalition will identify ways to increase administrative support by 9/05	<input type="checkbox"/> In progress Example of measure: The number of times administrative support is demonstrated through recognition, policy, time, money, or visits to the food service department.
Other (please specify)	<input type="checkbox"/> Strength <input type="checkbox"/> Develop Date		<b>In progress</b>



## Chapter 6 *School Meals*

### Module 6: M-and-M's for School Meals

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#### Step Up and Step Out to market and model!

Just think of all the mouthwatering restaurant and fast food ads we see every day. The ads are usually very attractive and fun! We don't expect anything less when it comes to *any* meals we purchase...whether it is eating "out" or at school!

Obviously there is not enough time or money to market at school the way big businesses do...with TV spots, magazine/newspaper ads, and radio jingles...but there *are* some very simple things that can be done to make healthy meals more attractive and increase participation!



First and most importantly, know your customer! Understand their needs, wants and values. School health initiative customers include students, parents, faculty, the community, administrators/board members, and last, but not least, the food service staff!

Early **Step Up and Step Out** schools have given feedback that helps to identify some of the factors that should be considered when marketing school meals.

#### Marketing to students



Why do students eat or not eat school meals? What can we do to gain their participation and support?

Student feedback indicates they want:

- ♥ Familiar, favorite foods
- ♥ Quick service
- ♥ Meal time to be a fun, social time with friends
- ♥ To feel less hurried at lunch
- ♥ Choices of menu items, salad bars, a la carte items
- ♥ Ownership, involvement in the menu planning

## Marketing to parents



Do parents have the same needs, wants, and values as their children regarding school meals?

Parent feedback indicates they want:

- ♥ Nutritious, healthy school meals
- ♥ Plenty of food offered so the kids are not hungry
- ♥ A pleasant, relaxed environment
- ♥ A good value for their meal cost
- ♥ Fewer prepared, convenience foods

Much like other family issues, there is usually a wide variance of ideas about school meals. Families can work together to understand each other's points of view, and make differences known to the coalition for consideration.

## Marketing to school staff



Teachers can be great advocates and allies for the school meal program. Not only do they spend a great deal of time interacting with the children, but also their own eating choices and activity behaviors are very visible. These things put teachers in a position to serve as important role models. What do they tell us about their expectations from school meals?

Teacher feedback indicates they want:

- ♥ Alternative menu choices such as salad bars
- ♥ In some cases, menus that are lower in calories than the student menu
- ♥ A relaxed meal time, time to take a break
- ♥ Children to understand the importance of healthy food choices when selecting a school meal
- ♥ To use school meals as a valuable teaching tool
- ♥ For children to waste less food

## **Marketing to community partners**



In order for community members, groups, and businesses to want to **Step Up and Step Out** and be a part of the team, each must understand and identify with the school meal program. Marketing outside the cafeteria, beyond the school walls to the community, might seem new to many but can yield great benefits for the program.

Community partner feedback indicates that this group:

- ♥ Often does not have much direct contact with the school meal program
- ♥ Relies on what others say to form an opinion about school meals and service
- ♥ Would like to be invited more frequently to be a part of the program

## **Marketing to administration and school board**



Now we consider the needs and concerns of the policy makers. While they must take into consideration all of the above mentioned expectations of school staff, parents, and students, other factors are also considered. This group is an important partner in creating a good marketing campaign, and in operating a successful school meal program.

School board and administrative feedback indicates they want:

- ♥ To see a balanced budget
- ♥ To hear positive feedback regarding the program from parents, students, and community (they often only hear the negative)
- ♥ Efficient school meal operations, but they often do not understand how to create efficient operations

## **Marketing to food service staff**



Food service staff are definite customers of school meals! They influence the presentation “feel,” and “touch” of the school meal program. Schools need the support, expertise, and involvement of these individuals.

Feedback from food service staff indicates they want:

- ♥ Children to enjoy the meals
- ♥ Adequate time and staff to provide quality meal service
- ♥ An opportunity to interact with the children
- ♥ To feel like a part of the school team working for children
- ♥ Administrative support
- ♥ More opportunities to communicate with parents, teachers, administration, and community for understanding



### *Hear Ye, Hear Ye...*

It is important to make people aware of the great things happening in the school meal program. Shout out success by marketing and modeling the creative programs, events, and activities of the school meal program.

## **Student activities**



### **Example 1: Build the Pyramid**

A large Food Guide Pyramid is painted on the cafeteria wall, and students place cafeteria menu item place cards in the appropriate food groups in the food pyramid. This makes for a great activity while waiting in the lunch line, and a visual teaching tool.

### **Example 2: Name that Room**

Students participate in an essay contest to name the school cafeteria. Essays are read each day over the intercom to the student body. Best essays and names are featured in the school newsletter, or the community paper. Coalition members serve as judges, or have the entire student body vote!

### **Example 3: Sharing Lunch**

Lunchtime should be a fun, relaxed time, but can also provide a learning experience. This time can be used to highlight student activities by having them share musical talents, selected artwork, readings, and other skills. The show and tell can lend itself to a quiet, relaxed mealtime and allow students to develop self-esteem and confidence as they share with the group.

## Parent activities



### **Example 1: Celebrate**

Parents and grandparents are invited to come join students for a Thanksgiving meal. Invitations are made in the classroom as part of a writing lesson, art project, or group activity. The activity incorporates a lesson in history, period dress (Pilgrim hats), and table manners. Caregivers have an opportunity to spend time with their student and learn first hand about the school meal program.

### **Example 2: Service with a Smile**

Students lead their families on a guided tour through the food service department. The students share their knowledge about the kitchen with parents, such as how many meals are served and meal guidelines. This activity can begin with students and families helping to serve the meal, sharing a meal together, and then concluding with the walk through tour, with students as tour guides.

## Teacher activities



### **Example 1: Inquiring Minds Want to Know!**

A teacher survey is conducted easily through a teacher newsletter. This survey allows for input regarding menu ideas, food service staff involvement in the classroom, student feedback, new ideas, theme day promotions, and concerns among other things. The key to this activity is to use the information provided to help improve service, and meet the needs of the students and staff. The teachers will feel part of the change, and be motivated as a partner to support the school meal program.

### **Example 2: Weigh Down!**

Many teachers struggle to find enough time to be physically active, and find selections to make healthy eating choices for maintaining a healthy weight. Offering fresh fruits and vegetables, healthy salad options, or other menu items teachers suggest creates support for the school meal program, while assisting them in making healthy lifestyle choices.

## Community activities



### **Example 1: Thank You Days!**

Invite to lunch community members who have shown support to the school or school meal program. Have the NAC group plan and present a short skit or activity during lunch that highlights accomplishments.

### **Example 2: Get Published!**

Have the local newspaper publish “meal tips” or favorite recipes scaled down to “family-sized” servings (remember to “test” the scaled down version first, since not all recipes can be scaled down without additional adjustments).

## Administration/board activities



### **Example 1: Presenters-Are-We!**

Have the NAC group present skits or activities that they have prepared for other audiences, at the school board meetings. Chances are the school board meeting will be well attended by parents as a result.

### **Example 2: Do You Know?**

Provide nutrient analysis information for foods and beverages served at school board meetings or other administrative functions. Include a “School Meal Program Thought for the Day,” i.e., nutrition information or school meal facts.

## Food service staff



### **Example 1: Walk and Talk**

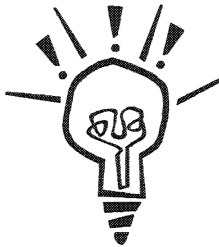
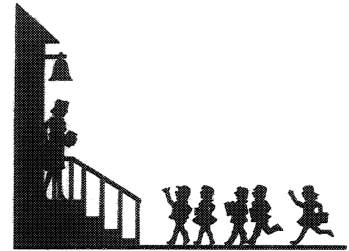
Food service staff model healthy behaviors by using break times, or after work hours to walk together as a team. This serves not only as a personal healthy lifestyle practice, which is an excellent modeled behavior for the students and other staff, but a creative way for staff to develop team work.

### **Example 2: Did You Know?**

Food service staff reads the lunch menu over the intercom, and also give short nutrition quizzes, and healthy eating messages. This serves to further link the students, faculty, and food service staff as one team. It also serves as a type of reward for food service staff.

## Planning school meal program M-and-M's

The school meal program plays a key role in the development and sustainability of a successful school health initiative. While most would agree with this statement, getting all partners to agree on what that role should be, and how to best involve the staff and school meal activities can be a challenge. Meet the challenge by getting feedback from all customers. Use the survey found at the end of this module to begin a very important step toward meeting your goals!



### Module Tip:

Opportunities to market and model the school meal program do not have to be time consuming, expensive, or difficult. Opportunities exist in the kitchen itself, the cafeteria, down the halls, and beyond the walls of the school into the community.

### FAQs:

- **Question:** What can be done to make it easy for the food service director to participate in marketing activities?

**Answer:** Working with the food service director, the coalition will lend support and resources whenever possible. Creating the plan with time lines provides review by which to determine if the activities are feasible, considering time and other resources available.



## School Meal Marketing Worksheet

A survey created to identify “customer” issues related to a school meal program in advance of creating a marketing plan is given as an example below. In actual practice, the questions can be modified to address specific questions in your community. Imagined responses from an “administrator,” the community group targeted for this survey are provided as an example.

### Example

### School Meal Survey



Indicate the Community Group Surveyed: Administrators/School Board

<b>1. What is the perceived image of your school meal program?</b>
<i>A necessary component in the school day.</i>
<b>2. Identify the purpose or goals of your school meal program:</b>
<i>Serve well-liked, nutritious meals within a specified budget.</i>
<b>3. Identify the strengths of your school meal program:</b>
<i>It meets the needs of students.</i>
<b>4. Identify the areas for possible improvement/change:</b>
<i>Stay within budget.</i>
<b>5. What makes a successful school meal program?</b>
<i>An operation that doesn't produce complaints from parents.</i>



### Example



An example of how the coalition used the responses of the administrator, and other administrators to create a School Meal Marketing Plan for that particular customer group is provided below.

### School Meal Marketing Ideas

<p><b>Identify opportunities for school meals to partner with the “customer group surveyed:</b></p> <p><i>Inform administrators of activities to better understand the school meal program by:</i></p> <ol style="list-style-type: none"> <li>1. <i>Presenting information and taste tests at school board meetings.</i></li> <li>2. <i>Creating a “Walk with the Administrator Program” for Food Service Staff as a part of wellness and recognition programs.</i></li> <li>3. <i>Establish a schedule for meeting with administrators on a regular basis.</i></li> </ol>
<p><b>Identify marketing steps that can be taken to address school meal misperceptions:</b></p> <ol style="list-style-type: none"> <li>1. <i>Send reports and newsletters about school meal activities to administrators and school board members.</i></li> <li>2. <i>Clarify budget/income issues.</i></li> </ol>

**Action:** Two survey forms are provided on the following pages, one for adults and another for kids.

1. Make copies of the surveys and give to a group of people who represent each of the different community groups: **food service staff (they are customers, too!), kids, parents, teachers, administration/board, and other community members.** Have each person answer the questions from their perspective.
2. Afterward, review the responses to address issues identified in order to develop a marketing ideas that will be included in your action planning.



## School Meal Survey

Indicate the Community Group Surveyed: \_\_\_\_\_

<b>1. What is the perceived image of your school meal program?</b>
<b>2. Identify the purpose or goals of your school meal program:</b>
<b>3. Identify the strengths of your school meal program:</b>
<b>4. Identify the areas for possible improvement/change:</b>
<b>5. What makes a successful school meal program?</b>



## Kid's School Meal Survey

Indicate the Community Group Surveyed: \_\_\_\_\_

**1. What do you think of first when I say, "school meals?"**

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**2. Why do you think there is a school meal program?**

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**3. What are the best things about your school meal program?**

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**4. What are the things being done now that might be better and how can you help?**

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**5. Are there other things that could be done to make a great meal program?  
How could you help?**

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## School Meal Marketing Ideas

**Customer group:**

**Identify opportunities for school meals to partner with the “customer group surveyed:**


**Identify marketing steps that can be taken to address school meal misperceptions:**
